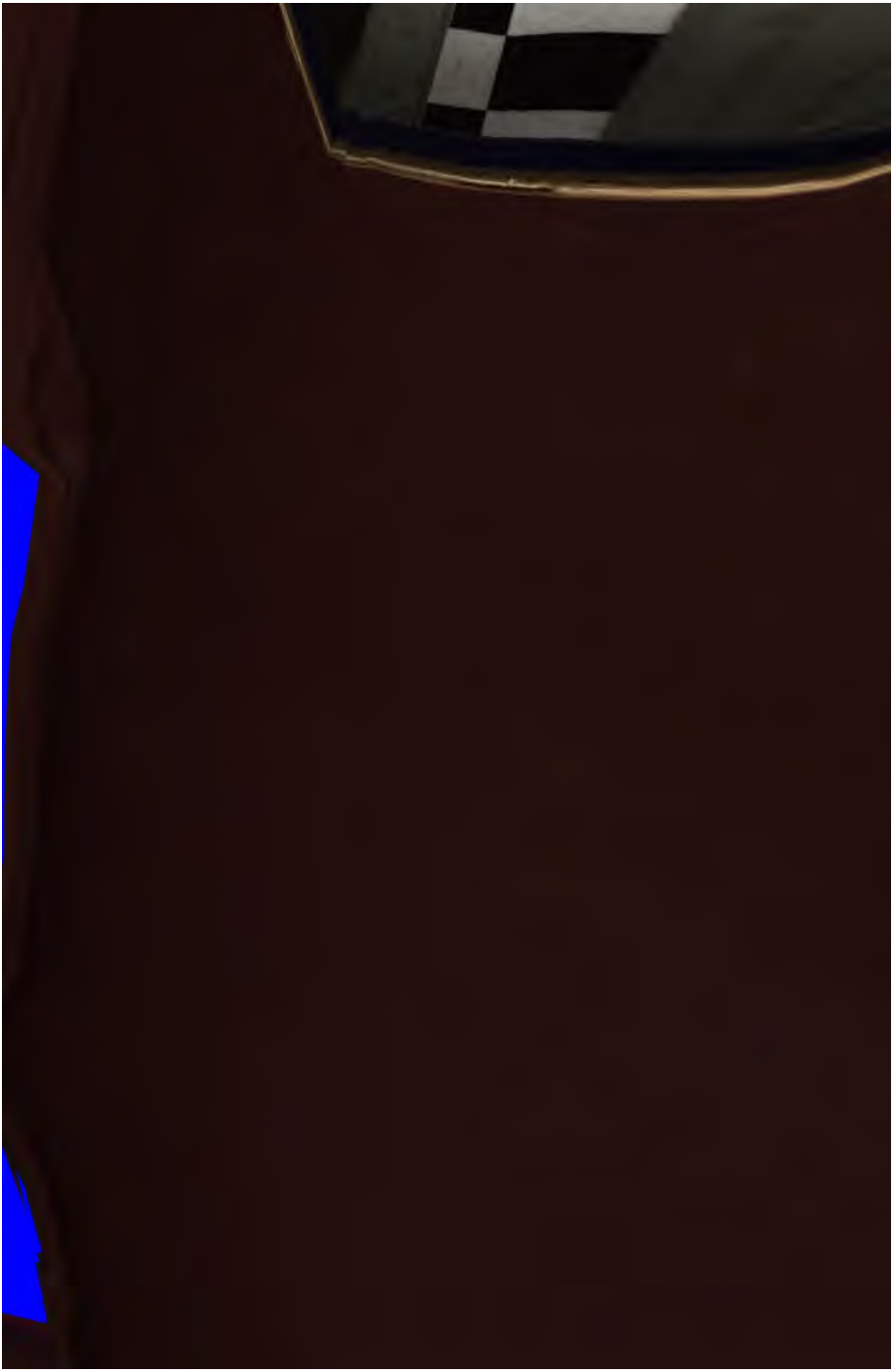

By the Roadside.

BY

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PREFACE.

An Author sees the scenes before him, converses with his characters, and puts down his impressions with more or less success. These are printed, bound, and sent to the Publisher. The book appears; the Public get it, and so do the Critics. Some throw it away with a sneer; others say, let us give the new name a trial; others again, we have enough to do with older and better hands; and others, the last, not the least, let us plant our sharp teeth into his flesh, that he may know us at once. Good Critic, for I will address you first, be not too severe. Gentle Reader, believe me, I have tried to put down honestly what I saw. Sometimes another hand helped me to take the impression, and we fixed it together.

Effort is the parent of future action. That is all the excuse I have for this book.

THE SCARLET GLOVES.

IN the fourteenth century there stood near the Rhine a noble castle, whose towers and battlements looked down upon green meadows, rich fields, and the vine-clad borders of the majestic river that is so great a source of pride to the Germans. The castle reared its head on an eminence that could not be called a steep rock, but still rose high enough to overawe the surrounding country, giving power and importance to the lordly pile upon it. Here lived Count Rodern, one of the richest and mightiest of the many nobles who dwelt near the Rhine. Count Rodern had often been in the field with Lewis IV., Emperor of Germany, and had assisted him to maintain his crown against his rivals; the Count was therefore a welcome visitor to the Imperial Court, and his fine figure and stately bearing caused him to be looked upon as equal in rank to noblemen superior to him. Every one wondered that none of the fair daughters of the Rhine-lands, and none of the noble dames at court, should have convinced the Count that it was time to look for a wife, and that his possessions were in danger of passing to a branch of his family which he most heartily detested.

People might wonder, Count Rodern remained unmarried. His woods often rang with the joyous calls of hunting-parties preparing for the chase, and his halls with the noisy revelry of the evening's carouse, but no noble dame presided at more regular festivities, and it was at last whispered abroad that some false fair one had at first gained the Count's love, and then preferred a higher title, and that the seeds of mistrust and malice had thus been sown in his once generous nature.

About twenty miles to the north of Count Rodern's castle, called Hohenstein, there lay one of those thick forests that skirted the low ranges of mountains in the west of Germany, and afforded protection to all kinds of evil doers in the middle ages. On the borders of this forest there arose ominously an old burgh or minor castle, whose face was blackened by time, and whose appearance was far from inviting. It was called Falkenstein; and was known far and wide as the most famous robber-castle, where Baron Kaunitz drove his nefarious trade. Robber nobles had become the curse of Germany in those times. They would wait for the unwary merchant, as he came along the public roads with his waggon-loads of merchandise, and then fall upon him, take all they could carry off, and either murder some of the party or leave the whole gagged, frightened, and helpless in the road, till some good Samaritan came by to assist them.

Baron Kaunitz, called also "Black Kaunitz," had for many years held terrible sway on Falkenstein. The road to Frankfort-on-the-Main led by the burgh, and only those merchants who willingly paid him black-mail were allowed to pass unmolested; others, if not robbed of all, were generally stripped of a good portion of their property. Numerous complaints had been laid against him with the

Archbishop, who governed the district, and had even been carried to the Emperor's court; but somehow no one much cared to touch the Black Baron. He belonged to an old family, that had once been better off, and had been closely united to some of the best blood near the Rhine, and the name of Kaunitz protected the noble robber.

The inmates of Falkenstein presented the strongest contrast; while the Baron caroused in his dingy hall, with a few nobles of not much better reputation than himself, and gave vent to many an oath and many a noisy song, there stood on the edge of the old rampart a pair, that would have been an excellent subject for a painter's brush: Lilly, the Baron's daughter and her cousin Rupert. The maiden counted some seventeen summers, the youth some nineteen, and it could easily be perceived that a strong love had grown up between them, without their even being conscious of it. Rupert, the Count's nephew and his sister's only child, had been brought up at Falkenstein since he had been left an orphan at ten years of age. The Baron would not have thought of allowing Rupert to join in his dark deeds; so Rupert led an easy, dreamy life, instructed in the learning of the time by the monks of the nearest monastery, and instructing in turn his gentle cousin in whatever a maiden might be allowed to learn in those days.

But studies pursued by young people of both sexes are dangerous things, and so it proved here; Lilly and Rupert were deeply in love with each other. Together they had wandered into the thick forest, gathering wild berries; together they had walked by the brook plucking blue forget-me-nots; together they had played the zither and sung the romances of the time, and had taken what alms they had to give to the hamlet a few miles off, and soothed in some measure the aversion towards the Baron. No one visited

Falkenstein, with whom they could associate, and they were entirely thrown upon their own resources. Little the Baron cared; he loved them both in his own strange fashion, and to let them alone was to him the very essence of being good and kind to them. Now and then, when he pressed a kiss on Lilly's cheek, a spasm as of some sacred remembrance would pass over his features; perhaps the image of that sweet loving woman, who had for a few years been his wife and guardian angel, came across his mind. Lilly's mother had died three years after her wedding-day, leaving her infant daughter alone and almost unprotected in a very turbulent world.

One mild afternoon in June, while all nature was revelling in the warm rays of the sun, and no one cared to be shut up in dull bare rooms, that had in those times not much to invite you to remain within, Lilly wandered forth beyond the drawbridge, and went to meet her cousin Rupert by the brook, on the road to the monastery, where he had spent the morning in study and devout exercise. A soft white robe, edged with blue, hung in graceful folds around her slender figure; a net of golden thread clasped ringlets of a richer hue; and a white muslin hood, embroidered with forget-me-nots, thrown over her small head, shaded her pretty features from the brightest rays of the June sun. A satchel hung by her side, into which every now and then she put some pretty wild flower or useful herb, humming the romance of the 'Untruthful Knight and the Broken-hearted Lady Irmengard.' Lilly came thus to the brook, scarcely knowing how fast she had walked, and that her cheeks had gained a richer hue and her eyes a brighter light from the exercise. Suddenly there burst forth a loud "Halloa" from the forest, and at the same moment several huntsmen, richly clad, rode out, talking and laughing with boisterous happiness. Lilly, half-frightened,

was about to hasten off, when an exclamation rooted her to the spot.

"Ho, now, my noble friends, let us have a look at yon robber's nest, against which the last complaint has been laid with the Emperor. Lewis swears it shall be razed to the ground, and has commissioned me to take a survey. There it looms, looking ugly enough!" So exclaimed the noblest of the huntsmen, riding a little in advance of the others; but, as he looked up at the castle, the sun so strongly affected his eyes that he had to cast them down, and they fell on Lilly, as she stood under a willow-tree near the brook, nervously holding the last forget-me-not she had plucked. The contrast of the dingy old burgh above, and the sweet maiden here below, struck the huntsman, and, gently bending down to her, he said, "Pray, beautiful lady, for I can see you are of noble birth, how is it that you roam about here alone, without escort, to be frightened by us wild companions? May I ask your name, and protect you home?"

"Home!" Lilly answered bitterly, at once comprehending the whole misery of those threatening words. "Home! Would you lead the daughter of yon robber's nest home?" she repeated.

"You, fair lady, you, the daughter of the Black Baron! impossible!" replied the huntsman.

"Yes, my Lord, yes. I am Lilly, the daughter of Baron Kaunitz, and, whatever to others, he is my own beloved father!" Lilly's voice had become steady, and her full blue eyes looked now steadfastly into the proud brown orbs of Count Rodern, for he it was who had accosted her.

"So foul and so fair to be mated," said the Count musingly, "so fair—aye, fairer and sweeter, and with more trusting eyes than, than"—and he evidently thought of some one far away in the distance of time and memory.

Suddenly re-calling his thoughts, he said, "Lady, I shall escort you home, be it Falkenstein or any other place, and, may be, I had better converse with your father. Is he at home?"

Lilly looked up in wonder, but met so determined a gaze, that all doubt about submitting to her imperious companion vanished, and she saw that his will must be obeyed.

"Yes, my lord," she answered, "he returned home late last night, and I have not yet seen him to-day."

"Oh, late last night. I suppose he was out on some of those infernal expeditions; but hush, fair lady, do not distress yourself, I will see what I can do to recall him to a sense of his own dignity."

There was no help, Count Rodern turned to his companions, and requested them not to mind his absence, but to return to his castle at their will; as they had ridden out more for pleasure than for the chase, they would not miss him much. He would escort the lady home, and his page would await him with his horse at the same place.

It was strange, Lilly could not prevail on herself to tell the Count that she was waiting for some one, that she would have a companion home without him; but quietly gave way to the superior power of his will.

Up they wended their way, through the meadows and cornfields, through the brushwood and forest, till they emerged in front of the burgh, and mounting the pretty steep hill, passed without hindrance over the drawbridge into the outer court. Neither of them had spoken a word, something seemed to hold a spell over them, though the Count had, with the most delicate care, shielded Lilly's foot from thorn and briar.

"Where shall I find your father?" the Count asked at last.

Lilly, in place of answer, turned to her left into a low

lodge and knocked, but received no answer; the whole court was ominously silent, the mid-day sun had lulled the inhabitants to sleep, it seemed, for no attendants and no living creature could be seen. Lilly, still silent, led the way through the mossy courtyard, passing a postern that led to an inner court, where bristling arms stood about, and some confusion appeared to have reigned a short while ago; but here also nobody could be seen, and the most profound quiet prevailed. Some broken stone steps brought them into the lower part of the principal tower, and here Lilly's silence gave way; gently she laid her hand on the Count's arm and said:

"I will take you at once to my father." There was an honest directness in these words, that went straight to the Count's heart, and taking that little white hand in his own, he stooped to kiss it, and then replaced it on his arm. Both passed thus through a low dark passage, and suddenly stood before a spacious hall, round which flags and arms hung in dismal disorder, and where heavy carouse had evidently been held. When the eye had wandered forth to the upper end, a large oaken table was discerned covered with drinking cups, and at the head of this table sat a man whose hair, streaked with grey, fell over his face, which rested on his arm, in sullen sleep. Lilly raised her hand from the Count's arm, and pointing to the table, said, "There is my father."

The Count stood still; he looked at the prostrate figure, he looked at the table covered with the tell-tale cups, he looked round the neglected old place, and then, with a deep-drawn sigh, he turned his full gaze upon the lovely girl by his side, and once more raising the little hand to his lips, said:

"For your sake, I will save him."

A sudden bound, and the Baron jumped up from his seat, exclaiming: "Who is here? Who spoke; what traitor has

penetrated into my burgh?" and, turning fiercely round, he glared in wild dismay at the pair before him. Lilly went fearlessly up to her father, softly wound her arms round his neck, and said, "Father dear, this noble gentleman has come to transact business with you; he met me down in the meadows, and I promised to bring him to you. I have done so, and now listen to him, and let me, for whose ears it is not meet to hear her father's affairs, retire." She pressed a loving kiss on that furrowed cheek, and with a look of such beseeching grace, that it would have moved the hardest heart, turned to the Count, and left the hall.

There stood those two men opposite each other: the one with a wasted manhood behind him and an unhonoured old age before him; the other in the prime of his years, wealthy, respected, proud, full of that *hauteur* which a successful career in life gives to nobility. This meeting at once and for ever crushed Baron Kaunitz's spirit; he felt that his deadliest foe would not so utterly have annihilated him, as did the supercilious but firm gaze of the Emperor's messenger. No word had been exchanged between them; it was the mere moral influence of one character on the other that determined their future relation to each other. Count Rodern was not slow to perceive his advantage, and was the first to speak.

"Permit me, Baron, to be seated in your hall," he said, drawing a massive oaken settle to himself, "and permit me also to be sharp and decisive with you."

The Baron did not answer, but reseated himself, resting his hands on his knees, and never raising his eyes. The position signified utter dejection of mind, a good state to be worked upon.

"Baron Kaunitz," continued the Count, "I am here as messenger from the Emperor, to announce to you your

formal doom. The charges against you of highway-robbery have been so fully proved, and so earnestly urged, that nothing remains for my Imperial master but to let justice loose on you, to raze your burgh to the ground, and to confine you in one of the fortresses of the realm for life. Such was my message, such was my intention, to be carried out with force, if necessary; but, while gazing on this old robber's nest in the meadows below, an angel came to intercede for you. That angel was your daughter, I met her by chance, and that chance has saved you. I came here alone, without escort, and must venture to take the responsibility of swerving from my instructions on myself, and am ready to do so, on one condition."

"That condition?" was all that broke from the lips of the Baron.

"The permission to sue for your daughter's hand, if she refuse not."

No electrical shock could have so transformed the Baron; he sprang from his seat, he rushed across the hall to the seat of the Count, he took hold of both his hands, he looked into his face, scanned it, and then exclaimed:

"You, you, whom I know to be the proud Count Rodern; who, unstained in reputation, might wed any lady in the land, you want my Lilly, Black Kaunitz's daughter? If you mean it, like an honest man, take her, bless her, love her, cherish her, make her forget her father, and restore her to that sphere from which I drove her. But remember, Count Rodern, that weak as one quarter of an hour has made me, broken in spirit as this little time has rendered me, as a stern avenger should I come before thee didst thou play her false."

"Baron, Count Rodern has no answer to this outbreak, but that he will cherish the lady whom he honours with his hand. Your Lilly is a gem; and for that gem, known to me

but since an hour, I vouch I will let you go scot free; that is, on your word as a true knight, that henceforth the career of Baron Kaunitz, or the 'Black Baron,' is ended, and that in future you live in decent retirement at your burgh."

"That promise I give, Count:" and taking his sword from its scabbard the Baron laid it crosswise on the sword of the Count, and solemnly said, "I swear."

"Have all this removed," continued the Count, looking round, "and await me to-morrow at ten o'clock in the forenoon."

No answer was expected, no answer was given. The Count strode from the hall, along the narrow passage, through the postern, down the broken steps, passed the first courtyard, the second, and the drawbridge, and left, as he had come, unnoticed, having, meanwhile, changed the destiny of those who lived in the old burgh.

In the hall the Baron sat motionless on his bench in deep thought, buried in that painful reverie in which a man feels that his life has been wrong, and that the threads of it have been taken up by other hands, to whose will he must henceforth succumb, and that free agency had been lost by its having been abused. He sat on, until a light step tripped in, soft arms wound round him, and sweet lips pressed a kiss on that hard old hand.

"My darling, my child!" the old man whispered, half-sobbing. "My Lilly is to redeem her father, and save him from the robber-noble's fate, by giving her hand in marriage to Count Rodern, the Emperor's messenger, who has just penetrated into my burgh, led by my little one herself."

"Father dear, forgive me," Lilly replied, "there was no help, and it is better your child should fall a sacrifice than you be reduced thus! Marry the Count! oh, father, marry the Count, didst thou say? Must it be, must it be?" she

exclaimed excitedly, as the truth flashed upon her. "But why should I waver, why repine! Father, if it saves thee, I am ready!" And laying her golden head on his knees she clung to him with devoted fondness.

"Yes, Lilly, to-morrow the Count will come at ten o'clock to demand you formally, and, I suppose, will scarce accord a week for the preparation of the nuptials. I have sworn on our crossed swords never again to head an expedition. I shall dismantle my burgh, and shall end my days in retirement."

"No, no, father, where I go thou goest. Come with me, that thy contented countenance may give me strength to sustain the sacrifice."

"And Rupert?" replied the Baron.

"Ah! Rupert,"—sighed the maiden—"Rupert! Father, love him, sustain him, when I am gone. I will be strong; but keep Rupert here."

At that moment the youth walked into the hall: amazed at the novel scene, he stood in silence, looking on father and daughter.

"My son, come here, I have much to say to you," the Baron said. But Lilly, springing up, screamed out as if in agony. "Not now, not now; let me go. Adieu, father, adieu, Rupert. I want rest and shall go to my chamber."

She fled from the hall, and with her disappeared the light from Rupert's life; henceforth it would but be a groping in the dark with him to find the right way. There are times in our life when our inward sight becomes enlarged and we see things in advance, when present occurrences lead our minds direct to the results they foreshadow. Such was Rupert's case, an orphan, bred up in semi-solitude, his very lifeblood had been concentrated on one person only, his lovely cousin Lilly. Tear her from him, and the roots of his being

became loosened, leading to one of those heroic disasters, which we in ordinary life so often proclaim as improbable, and which yet are but a phase of man's multifarious ways of being.

Rupert stood stupefied, without power to ask the why and wherefore; and the old Baron, till now so bold and unscrupulous, went up in his altered subdued manner and uneasily asked him to sit down and listen. Rupert sat down mechanically. In a few brief words the occurrences of the last hours were told, and his fate sealed by as black a seal as ever mourning letter bore. Great sorrows take away the power of expressing them in speech, and Rupert remained silent. When the Baron had ended, and a few minutes had passed, the sense of loss and loneliness that came upon Rupert was almost unbearable; one thing appeared to him more prominent than others, the next visit of the Count.

"When will Count Rodern come again?" he asked hoarsely, and, scarcely attending to the answer, left the hall.

The soft breeze of a June evening near the Rhine floated abroad: some creatures crept to rest, others came forth to enjoy the balm and sweet scent of coming night. A red bright glow crimsoned the edges of the sky, and shot out dying streaks of yellow light over the horizon. It was so beautiful, so lovely, so inviting out; it was so black, so sad, so repulsive within. And again two figures stood on that old rampart: the graceful figures of two young beings, that love, with the innocent feeling which God has deeply implanted in man and woman, and which no distortion of society had twisted into the ugly selfish shape that is owned by lower instincts.

What was there to tell between them? Words would have expressed nothing; sighs come from slighter hearts than

theirs—the burden was so heavy, so crushing, the annihilation to both so complete, because it met them so unprepared and unconscious of the feeling that had existed between them, that no outlet appeared even probable. Both understood that the present state of affairs must be accepted as the only possible one; that the old Baron, father to both, could not be sacrificed, but that they must; and both merely stood there, like two hopeless children, feeling the iron necessity of human life.

"Lilly," at last said Rupert, "my last forget-me-nots, take them, I go home to-morrow; home, yonder there, to the monastery. Think of Brother Rupert in future."

"Rupert," Lilly whispered, "think of my father; close his eyes first, they will not be open long, and then do as you will. I have no power to alter our destiny."

"Your wish is a command and shall be obeyed. I will see the Prior at sunrise, tell him all, and return at midday."

They stood still again: no word was spoken. Nature's life swarmed and hummed in hushed accents around them, but they heeded not; the sounds of desultory movements came from the courtyard below, but they heard them not; till darkness actually threatened to close around them, and then Lilly said simply,

"Good night, Rupert." But he, his manhood getting the better of his restrained feelings, held out his arms, and catching the girlish figure to his breast, pressed her convulsively to his heart, showering kisses on every loved feature. Then, without adieu, without a syllable, he rushed away into the darkness and gloom.

The next morning arose. From off the majestic trees, from the dewy meadows, from the dripping brushwood, came the morning vapours, enveloping mother earth in cloudy drapery, through which the sun-chariot was beginning to

shoot her first faint rays. Regardless of human woe and human joy, the heavenly messenger shed forth her light, and one small spray fell on the bowed head of a youth who was wending his way down the forest path to the monastery, near Falkenstein. Early matins had been ringing from the cloister bell, and the arrival of the visitor somewhat startled the brother who opened the gate. Rupert quickly asked for the Prior on urgent business, and could hardly control his impatience as he walked up and down the soft grassy walks of the outer garden. An old man presently joined him, whose clear blue eye spoke of as clear a soul within, and who seemed to have carried into the monastery a mind more free from guile than was generally the case with the monks of the middle ages. A current of heartbroken misery was poured into his ears by Rupert, who sought from his old true friend the consolation he could not find elsewhere.

"Can you help us, Father?" asked Rupert.

"I will try and come at once with you," was the answer.

A few words of direction given to the brother at the gate were all that was needed, and the simple but much revered old man, turned back with Rupert on the way to Falkenstein.

Arrived here, they found all astir with preparations for the Count's arrival. The Baron was giving lusty orders to have this and that removed, to doom to destruction many of the tokens of his former occupations, to trim up and make the most of the old place, and particularly to give some appearance of grandeur to the old hall. Lilly, though always an early riser, was nowhere to be seen. So unusual a visitor as the Prior excited no mean amount of attention; all hands stayed a moment to show him due deference, while he was invited by the Baron to accompany him to his own room. Gloomy enough was this own room, looking down upon the waste side of the hill and the lonely road, that had led the

noble robber and his escort to many a nightly exploit and encounter.

The Prior broke at once into the subject, and heard from the Baron that no choice was left him, and that Lilly had raised no objection.

"But I do," said the Prior. "I, the confessor of your late sweet wife, as her relative, as Rupert's guardian, as your own friend, though little you have heeded my friendship and counsel, I tell you that ill omen surrounds this marriage. You, Baron, cannot return to the world that has condemned you; your daughter will meet haughty sneers from the high dames at Court, and may find an early grave like her mother. You are, it is true, a sinner, a great sinner, but I offer you a home with us, come to us, and repent. The Emperor's arm will not reach you there; let Rupert and Lilly become man and wife. Against so innocent, so holy a love, man's hand should not be raised, and I will myself get the dispensation on account of their close relationship."

The Baron mused a few minutes, and then arose, his own proud self again:

"Prior Berthold," he said, "you have spoken your words, you have offered a poor sinner a home, you have, as it were, already united Rupert and Lilly. It cannot be. Either I step from this burgh by my own free will, pardoned by the Emperor, or I let him attack me, and burn the rookery with me in it, and Lilly may weep over her father's fate in the nearest nunnery. That is my resolve; say no other word, you know me, raise not that fierce spirit, you have found slumbering, and keep Rupert with you till the wedding is over, and the Count with his bride is gone. I will still care for him, and his fortune may be made in another way, than the one he imagines."

The Baron gave the Prior no time to speak again. From

the room he led him, down the rickety steps, through courtyards and over drawbridge, calling to Rupert to accompany the Prior back again, and bidding his nephew a hasty farewell until that day week, when he should expect him back at the burgh.

Ten o'clock came, and with it the tramp, tramp of horses, the clinking of swords, the joyous brush of a cavalcade, through the thick trees up the hill, that halted at the moat surrounding the burgh. Merrily sounded the call of the bugle as the warder gave ear, and as stately as possible did an old retainer step out on the rampart to answer the call. The satisfactory answer having been given by the visiting party, down the drawbridge was let, and over it passed Count Rodern with two esquires and pages, his herald preceding him. You might forgive the old Baron, that his heart swelled with pride, as he received his guest below; he, the despised and hunted robber-noble to be honoured by one of the trustiest friends of Emperor Lewis. And Rodern did well what he had to do, his ungloved hand was given to the Baron, and he allowed himself to be led forward by his host into the same dingy hall where the day before he had dictated terms of submission to him.

Here, all that could be changed had been changed; flags and arms had been arranged somewhat symmetrically round the walls, everything valuable that could be found had been brought to adorn the room, and the floor strewn with soft rushes and fine sand. A rich canopy, though a little faded, covered two seats at the upper end of the hall, and the drinking cups on the table were of solid silver. The Baron led his guest to one of the seats of honour, and invited his squires to their seats, while his pages gave attendance; then he called his own greyheaded companion, Knut von Albe, and commanded him right nobly to request his daughter's

presence. But few minutes passed, and Knut returned with a maiden, whom one had to regard for a little while, in order to recognize in her the gentle Lilly of the previous day. A close dress of stiff brocade, that had been her mother's, fitted tightly her youthful figure, her golden hair hung in long streams down her back, held by a circlet, and jewels adorned her sweet neck and soft arms. Modestly, but regally, Lilly advanced, led by the old man, who had known her since childhood, and Count Rodern felt instinctively that Lilly had understood him, that henceforth regret and old times must be banished, and she must begin life as befitted the future Countess, his wife. But what was mostly changed in Lilly was her bearing: the unconscious maiden of the day before was gone, and in her place there stood the lovely woman; those burning kisses of Rupert's the night before had called forth all her womanly pride, and buried all her gentle tenderness. She knew that she sacrificed herself, her sweet love, her young dreams, and every look now said: "I think I and my sacrifice are worthy of the place you design for me."

Up rose the Baron, up rose the Count; the former received his daughter and presented her to the Count with the words:

"Count Rodern, at your request, I present to you my daughter Lilly, Baroness of Kaunitz, not only in her father's, but in her own right, granted since ancient times to the eldest daughters of our family."

The Count stepped forward, bent a knee before the beautiful Baroness, and said gently, but firmly:

"Baroness Lilly of Kaunitz, will you receive me as your betrothed husband, to share with me weal and woe?"

Clearly rang the words in return through the hall: "Count Rodern, I will."

Suppressing the delicious feeling of triumph that filled his breast, and that would have prompted him to press her to him in a warm embrace, the Count kissed the hand held out to him, rose from his posture, and stood up right nobly, a fitting mate for such a bride.

"Baron Kaunitz, have we your consent to our union?"

Forward stepped the Baron, and while two big tears trembled under those heavy lids, he placed the hands of the two in each other, almost gasping out the words:

"You have;" but immediately gathering up all the old chivalry in him, he overcame his emotion, and added solemnly, "I, Baron Kaunitz, of Kaunitz and Falkenstein, solemnly give my consent to the union of my daughter, the Baroness Lilly, of Kaunitz, with Count Rodern, of Hohenstein."

"Is there no friar here with parchment?" asked the Count.

"None is needed," resolutely answered the Baron, "when the bridal-day comes all shall be attended to."

"Then let that be in six days hence," replied the Count, "if your daughter approves."

There was just a slight spasm across that lovely countenance, but so slight, that it could not be perceived by the Count, and Lilly whispered modestly: "As you wish."

Gaily the cup now went round; healths were drunk, and the Count and Lilly, seated under the canopy, received the congratulations of those present. Half-an-hour later the Count rose, saying, that much business called him to Lewis's Court before the sixth day, and the peculiar intonation of those words, showed that he meant to say *that* time would be employed in the Baron's service, in order to obtain his free pardon. He should not return until the day of the nuptials; and, after their celebration, he should at once take his Countess home to Hohenstein.

The Count turned to Lilly, took both her hands in his, looked earnestly into her blue limped eyes, and pressed a warm kiss on her chaste forehead; only to her were the words audible: "Trust me, as I trust thee!"

In answer, Lilly took his hand, led it to her lips and breathed a maiden's kiss upon it. The movement was so delicate and tender that the Count's whole being became suffused with supreme bliss, and he could scarcely tear himself away. But "*noblesse oblige*," and Rodern held out his hand to the Baron, rapidly mentioned that he would faithfully execute his commission, and turning to the squires led the way from the hall and the burgh, conscious that he was highly blessed in having gained so great a treasure as Lilly.

The Count had offered but one present to his betrothed: a pair of scarlet gloves of the finest cloth, delicately embroidered in white silk, with lilies of the valley. With mediæval gallantry, Rodern had assured Lilly that these gloves were more precious to him than jewels; that they had been offered to him by imperial hands, and from his they should only pass to those best loved by him on earth: he begged of her earnestly to have them in close, sure keeping, as a token of truth and faith.

From the moment that Court Rodern left Falkenstein, the old Baron laboured and worked incessantly to obliterate as many traces as possible of old bad times; to break off evil connections; to send off property that did not belong to him, and to put himself, his burgh, and his few weather-beaten retainers into something like a condition fit for state and ceremony.

For Lilly nothing had been spared. Men had ridden on horseback with orders and parcels from morn to night to Frankfort-on-the-Main and back again, and all the elegant

attire that could be got with the Baron's means had been procured for her. Still there seemed a tiny black spot in the sky. That heartfelt joy, which precedes the union of young people that love each other fondly, was wanting, and Knut von Albe grumbled a good deal over all the nonsense that was going on, predicting, in the true old German style, all kinds of disasters that would happen if people would step out of the place God had given them. Poor Knut imagined it as much a part of God's business to create robber-nobles, as honourable counts and great emperors.

Lilly moved majestically about: lending a hand where it was wanted, preparing her own wardrobe with the help of old Ursula, her former nurse and faithful attendant, and showing a gentle respect for her father that pleased the old Baron very much. But the old Lilly was gone: that sweet smile had vanished, that tender expression of countenance, had been changed to something firm and stately, and her voice had adopted a slight tone of command. No one would now have dreamt to call her Lilly: she had become a baroness.

Four days had passed: four busy days, On the evening of the fourth day Lilly stood on the ramparts, looking away into the distance, and holding between her hands those scarlet gloves. "Tokens of truth and faith," she murmured, "truth and faith to be given by one whose heart is elsewhere, who would rather lay her head on that gentle cousin's breast, than on her noble future husband's. Mother sweet, mother dead, you whom I never knew, grant me strength, grant me power for ever to banish from my heart that fair youth, and become an honourable wife."

A sudden feeling of uneasiness came over her: she turned, and saw Rupert by her side! Only old Knut von Albe could have told how he did get there, but there he was.

"Lilly, Lilly, my fair cousin, must it be, must I lose you?"

"Rupert," she softly answered, "why ask at all, you yourself can have no other answer than I have?"

"Lilly, I shall die, I cannot bear it. God's earth has become a dark void to me."

"Rupert, rely on that, on which I do, that we must live for others."

"A maiden may, a man cannot," was the gloomy answer. "I cannot give you up."

"You will," said Lilly; "look here, in my hands I hold the only present the Count has given me, tokens, as he said, of truth and faith—a pair of scarlet gloves. I hold them tight, I hold them fast, and they strengthen me. He is now with the Emperor, getting my father's pardon, and should I fail him?"

"Show them to me," said Rupert.

Lilly held out the gloves, and Rupert looked at them, as well as the dusky light would permit, trying at the same time to take his cousin's soft white hand: the glove revenged itself, and fluttered down into the bushes far, far below.

"For Heaven's sake, what have you done?" screamed Lilly, "the ill-omen is fulfilled. Oh, he will never, never forgive me!"

"Forgive what?" hoarsely asked Rupert.

"The loss of the glove."

"Then let him spurn you, and you will become mine."

"No, Rupert, no; my father would be lost, and Lilly too, for I should enter the nearest convent."

"Lilly, you are mad!"

"No, I am not, but I must have my glove. Oh, my glove, my glove! to be thought faithless is unbearable." And the very idea became revolting to her nature.

"Rupert, I must have the glove," she said determinedly, "or I throw myself from the rampart."

Rupert looked, searched, peered over, but nothing could be seen, not even one red speck. Lilly became more and more excited, till she seemed almost frantic, and Rupert did not know what to do, for the glove could not be recovered in the depths below.

"Lilly," he said, "I will take horse, I will ride to Frankfort; give me the other glove. I will get another pair like them, and be here before the Count appears on your wedding-day, and then let poor Rupert have ever a gentle remembrance in the proud Countess's heart."

He disappeared with the second glove, and Lilly slowly returned to her chamber, crushed beyond measure by the sudden occurrence.

Up rose the last of the June mornings: the sixth and the bridal morning. Who had seen the gladsome face which nature put on, the happy robe she donned, would not have thought, but that all human sympathies must bend to her will, that there was one world for her, and another for man, that if she rejoiced, he should, and that rapine, murder, bloodshed, and all the ugly train of the gifts of the furies were of no avail in her ever beneficent presence! But man has a world of his own: and, however sprightly sunny June shed its brightness on that scene near the Rhine, on the last morning of its month, there lurked suspicion, regret, envy, and timorous fear in man's breast that would work and have their way.

Lilly, Baroness of Kaunitz, awaited her betrothed: as the morning star had faintly glimmered in the east, so did Lilly's pale countenance appear at her casement, watching, watching, watching, for the rider on that lonely road.

The morning star disappeared, the first glow of the brighter

luminary streaked the heavens, the horizon became flooded with light—all the same: still Lilly sat at the casement, and stirred not. Not till old Ursula came gently behind her, touched her shoulder, and begged of her to think of breaking fast, did she turn and think that such a thing existed. Gathering up all her innate courage, the poor girl rose, turned a blanched face to her nurse, and mechanically partook of what was offered her.

"It is eight o'clock," Ursula remarked, "and at nine we expect the Prior, who has at last promised to come; at ten we expect Count Rodern; and at eleven the ceremony is to take place. There is no time to lose, Baroness Lilly."

There was no complaint, no wail: to no one had Lilly confided her loss, and even old Ursula began to call her Baroness.

The important business of the bridal-toilette began, and Lilly came forth from it, like Aphrodite from the waves of the sea. The white satin robes made her supple limbs appear still more supple, the quaint Italian lace gave importance to the graceful robe, the wreath of blooming myrtle, that according to German custom, enclosed those rich golden locks, sainted the maidenly countenance, and the heavy ancient ornaments, which the Baron insisted should be worn, and which were made in emblematical shapes, lent a regal charm to the stately bearing of the bride. No one could have suspected that that bride's bosom was swelling with anxious doubts—whether the Count would expect her to wear the scarlet gloves, or would be satisfied with those of white silk, embroidered with blue forget-me-nots, that had been furnished by her father?

The toilet finished, Lilly seated herself at the window and watched, and watched till the last minute had passed that could well be spared, and till the Baron sent a message

that the bride's presence was expected. Down she came from her turret chamber, gently drawing her long robe around her, white and stately, like a sweet May-flower, to be given away to her lord.

The Baron was seated in his hall, that bore scarcely a resemblance to the forlorn old place of a week ago: green boughs hung round it in profusion, gay flags waved here and there, and arms bristled in divers combinations from the walls, the long oaken table shone with varnish, and reflected the handsome cups and goblets on it, the floor was strewn with soft rushes, and the chairs of state at the upper end had been furnished with new canopies. Here the Baron and the Prior sat, awaiting the arrival of the bridegroom and the bride. Lilly entered followed by old Ursula, and advanced meekly to the Prior; the venerable man placed his hand on her head, and said with intense feeling: "May God bless you, my child!"

Stillness again reigned in the hall. All three now sat and waited.

Suddenly there sounded a horn outside, and a troop of riders could be heard entering the courtyard. A minute or two later, in walked as gay a company as might well be met with.

Count Rodern came first, surrounded by that peculiar charm which the dress of the middle ages gave to a handsome cavalier. His courteous bearing distinguished him from among the others, and the plume in his hat waved gracefully as he entered and walked up the hall to the upper end. His two squires followed, his pages came next, and after them the halberdiers, who stood on guard at the entrance.

Lilly rose; she was very pale, and even Rodern started to see all his dreams realized, and meet so fair a vision. He advanced, bent his knee, and taking her hand, pressed it to

his lips. Turning to the Prior, he said: "Thanks, venerable father, I know you by name and repute; a union blessed by your consent, will undoubtedly also have God's blessing."

"So be it," was the simple rejoinder of the Prior.

"And you, Baron," said the Count, "who give me this sweet daughter of yours; may God help me to protect her in weal and woe."

"May He help you," answered the Baron, his voice a little uncertain from emotion.

The Baron walked first, then the Prior, followed by the Count leading his bride, according to German custom; the followers of the Count, old Knut von Albe, and some younger squires of the Baron's, closed the train. They wended their way through the low corridor, and entered the long disused chapel at the other end. Here also alterations had been going forward, that had changed it into something fit for the ceremonial to be celebrated in it.

Choristers stood at the altar, and received the bride with a low chant, that seemed greatly to affect Lilly, who trembled violently, so that the Count lent down to her in some anxiety; but her courage returned, and she went forward with a firm step.

The ceremony was over, the rings had been exchanged, after German rite, and Count Rodern and Lilly were man and wife. At this moment the Count stepped forward, drew from his breast a packet of parchment, gave it to the Baron, took his hand, which he shook heartily, and said: "This is my wedding present for you, father." The Baron opened the parchment, and his eye perceived the Imperial seal to his free pardon.

He turned to his daughter, and said: "Here, Count, is the reward promised; may your union efface old crimes."

"To which I say Amen;" responded the Prior.

Rodern seemed happy beyond description; his very looks appeared to draw in all the charm of that youthful innocent figure. Lilly tried her utmost to shew her lord that she too felt assured of future happiness, but there did remain a chill that she could not get rid of, and that would now and then make her heart ache. They had returned to the hall, the cups and goblets had been filled, and had gone their round, the Prior had left with a blessing for Lilly, and had given her a much esteemed relic for a present. It was then the custom for the bride to remain with the bridegroom under her father's roof till the morning after the wedding-day, and to be conducted by her father to her husband's home with whatever pomp could be mustered.

There was to be no exception to this custom at Falkenstein. Count Rodern,—to whom Emperor Lewis had given the free pardon for the old Baron, smiling at the infatuation, that such a man should interest himself so much for a robber-noble, and stoop to sue for him,—did not wish anything to be done that might offend the Baron's susceptibilities; he had therefore consented to remain under his roof till the following morning, and had even requested the Baron's escort home.

The wedding-repast was served. The steaming boar's head was the foremost of the dishes, and the smell of the finest venison scented the air. Huge masses of eatables were served to a crowd of servitors in the courtyard, and Lilly had taken care that the poor in the neighbouring hamlets should be supplied with something to remind them of the wedding-day. It was a merry day. The sun shone gladness on this scene of happiness on earth; the old burgh seemed renovated; the drawbridge was let down, and people streamed in from the neighbourhood, forgetting the Baron's bad name and bad deeds, and thinking of nothing but the

grand marriage. The old Baron was as blythe as possible, and the proud Count, with his youthful bride on his arm, unbent and walked about as one who felt he had something that made him happy.—Would it make others so? Ah, there lurked that demon distrust in the very silver lining of the cloud.

The afternoon had passed, and twilight was drawing nigh; the Baron, the Count, and the squires, attended by their pages, sat carousing in the hall, and Lilly had retired to her chamber. Here she changed her gay wedding-dress for that same soft robe of white edged with blue, in which we met her first; her face was pale, her eyes looked dim, every minute increased her anxiety, would the Count ask for the scarlet gloves before they came, and how would Rupert be able to deliver them to her! Oh, that she could have gone and spoken openly to the Count; but then that was just the fatality, the words would not come; the trust, that should have given her strength to speak out, was not there, for something in the Count's face said, "I can brook no deceit, I ought to have been told of this Rupert." The twilight strengthened, and Lilly came forth, having looked her eyes half-blind from her casement, to detect but that one figure up the road on the hill, and unconsciously she walked on till she stood on that ominous spot where the glove had been lost. She stood and thought of the change that one week had brought, of the sweet love-dream that had been shattered, of her grand and noble husband, and of her future life, that should be dedicated to him, in reward for the goodness he had shown her father. She was utterly lost in thought, when a hurried step came up to her, and a soft voice said, "Lilly, cousin dear, I have come at last."

"And the gloves?" gasped Lilly.

"Here they are," answered Rupert, "and I defy any one

to know the difference. I rode hard and fast; I found a skilled glove-maker, I watched their making, and hard and fast I have ridden back again to bring them to you. But, Lilly, while away, I have been thinking how wicked it would be to give you up like this; let me see the Count and tell him how we were brought up, how we have loved each other, without knowing it, and how hard it is to separate now. Perhaps he may take pity on us. Do you not hear, Lilly?"

"I am his wife," was Lilly's faint reply.

"His wife!" Rupert screamed, almost beside himself.

A heavy hand fell upon him: "Yes, his wife, you cowardly ravisher, who penetrates men's houses in the dark, and dares to address himself to a nobleman's wife. Who are you?"

"And who are you, you rude clown, to frighten a lady thus?" Rupert hissed between his teeth.

"I? Your death-warrant!" replied the other; "and this lady's husband." At this moment Lilly caught the bright gleam of steel, and frightened to death, threw herself into the Count's arms to hinder the thrust; but it glanced off, struck her, and was yet aimed with such fury, that it passed through her arm and hit Rupert slightly. He, maddened to see Lilly hurt, fell upon the Count, and was by the latter struck down with a second blow.

The groan of the falling man brought the Count to his senses. "What have I done?—Who is it?—Whom have I struck? Lilly, have I hurt you? For mercy's sake, speak!" called out the Count, kneeling by the side of Lilly's form.

The wound, the terror, the sudden fright, together with the loss of blood, had wrought her death-blow: Lilly was sinking, and Rupert already dead.

"You have killed my faithful young cousin," faintly said Lilly, "who was brought up with me—who loved me—who

gave me up for my father's sake—and who rode to Frankfort and back, to bring me another pair of scarlet gloves, because—because I lost one of the others; he brought them to-night—That is all—I meant no ill—I was faithful and true—I am dying—Oh, my poor old father!"

"Lilly, Lilly, live; I will make all the atonement in my power. I had been looking for you a long time, when I heard you often wandered here, and found you in amorous converse with a stranger. Let me see, he may not be dead. Oh, those cursed gloves! I believe they were given with an ill omen by that beautiful woman!"

But the Count might call, he might kneel down by his bride, the last breath had fluttered away, and two dead bodies lay in the grass on the rampart.

The Baron was still carousing in his hall, when a man strode in, with bloody hands and a bloody sword, with dishevelled hair and wild looks. Who would have thought it was Count Rodern! All rose, all started.

"Baron, I have just murdered my sweet young bride and her cousin, there, on the rampart.—This comes from deceit. —Why was I not told?—Bury them together, lay them side by side—Adieu."

He stalked from the hall like a spectre that had spoiled the feast, and was heard of no more.—

The next day, the cloister-bell tolled the death knell, and Rupert and Lilly were laid by the side of Lilly's mother. The sun shone all the same on the grizzly head of that bent old man. The birds sang just as merrily as the day before, but the demon had worked his spell.

A week later, the cloister bell rang again, and the old Baron was laid by the side of his children, having died of a

broken heart. The Prior wiped away a tear, and whispered, "I knew it, it could work no good; but he would have his way."

Years after: when the June sun had ten times looked down on that scene near the Rhine, and had rested on the ruin of the old burgh; when the wanderer had been shown those crumbling walls as the memento of a great human disaster; when the old river moved on just as majestically, and the birds sang merrily, and the hunter's horn sounded in the woods, a solitary pilgrim, who had been to the holy land, came and looked up at that ruin, and, his eyes being blinded by the sun, fell on a bed of forget-me-nots at his feet; then his eyes moistened, he murmured something, and continued his way to the nearest monastery, there asked for the Prior. And after that day, a brother went his way daily from the monastery to that same spot; and a year later he went no more, for they laid the brother low on the anniversary of that wedding-day. And Count Rodern had expiated his crime.

SNOWDROP.

THE SNOW KING'S DAUGHTER.

FAR, far beyond the regions of Iceland, where all nature becomes greyish,—where the clouds intermingle with the vapours from the earth, and the horizon is lost in indistinct lines,—where snow and ice reign and have their empire,—there rises in the blue distance a palace of white crystals: so fair, so grand, so finely built, that human hands cannot have constructed it, but some fairy process must have erected it, high above the earth's surface. Here reigns the Snow King. Soft showers of snow eternally surround his dwelling, and change and eddy and whirl about it, as if, in very sport, they were kissing the outlines of their King's dominion. Snow is here, and snow is there, and snow is everywhere: it covers the crystal columns, it floats in wavy clouds over the roof, and lies in deep masses at the foot of the fairy structure.

In grand snowy majesty reigns the King on his crystal throne, whose bright edges glitter and shine like diamonds. The sovereign is surrounded by his court, wrapped in long white draperies, keeping sedate and still, till the command for active sport and work is given; till the wise hale old

ruler, who occupies the throne, and whose long ringlets hang down to his knees, shakes but one, and off his satellites are to some one part of the world, to shower light flakes on city and hamlet, on hill and valley.

Grand was the state this day. The King had on his finest robe, his ringlets hung in beautiful order half over his person, his crown glistened with the sheen of new crisp crystals, and his mighty arm was uplifted to command.

"Let him enter," he said, in sonorous tones, "let him enter, the Prince of the Hailstorm." The word of command was passed on, and clitter, clatter, came invisibly the sound of many feet, and the unceremonious Hail, with his followers, entered, crushing and upsetting the order of the more refined Snow Palace.

First came the blustering, youthful Hail, with tangled locks and beard, throwing his head right and left, and stamping his foot, as if he meant to say, "he would be master;" then followed a host of goblin-like creatures, all stout and undersized, bobbing their heads and twisting their arms, and knocking their knees, as if a very storm of hail were coming down and the stones were all rattling against each other. Up went the Prince to his Snow Majesty's very throne, made obeisance, and said:

"Again I come, again I stand here, King of the white, flaked Snow. Your word has not been kept to give me your daughter in marriage, and for the last time I come to claim her; but I will this time not be put off. I must have your promise fulfilled, and Snowdrop must come home with me to grace my throne." And determinedly the prince stamped his foot.

"Prince of the Hail," measuredly answered the Snow King, "I promised you my daughter, if she were willing to have you, and she has neither said yes nor no: six times

have you come and claimed her, and six times have I asked her, and been put off—this is the seventh time; so let her be fetched, that she may answer you herself." He raised his hand, and said, "Let my daughter Snowdrop be called."

Off went a light tripping servitor, all flakes and crystals, while the court anxiously waited for the Princess, her father's darling, and the delight of the snow regions. A gentle rushing sound was heard, and two snow-maidens entered, fresh as the winter morning, bright as the winter sun, modest as the winter moon, but silent; behind them came the Princess, diffusing a light by her very presence, as if the stars were casting their rays around the wintry sky. Each step was hope, each movement grace, each feature life, each look a charm; and her whole figure was enshrouded by a silvery snowy cloud, that surrounded it like a bridal veil. Not noticing the strangers, but gently bending to her own court, she went up to her father's throne, and said, "Your Majesty has sent for me."

"Yes, Snowdrop, my beloved child, I have," answered the King; "much as I love you, the time has come, when you must wed, and grace another throne. You have been promised to the Hail; he is rough, but he is honest and brave, and will protect my Snowdrop from harm; he has come for the last time. You know a king's word must be kept; and, therefore, I ask you, will you marry the Prince of the Hail, who is here to claim you?"

"Father, dear, why send me away, why let me marry? I am fragile, I am wayward, and not fit to marry the Hail-storm, who ought to look for a wife among the Princesses of the Icefields; they are so grand and noble, and little Snowdrop is so spoiled, that she is not half worthy enough to fill so powerful a throne as that of the Hail."

"But I, fair Princess," said the Hail, "prefer little Snow-

drop to the proud Icicles, and your father having promised me your hand, must keep his word, and let me lead you home."

"It is true, my daughter," interposed the King; "you must not make your father gainsay his word, and you really must not refuse the Hailstorm's hand."

"Father dear, must I go," whispered Snowdrop, winding her soft white arms round him; "must I?"

"You must, my darling, the promise was sacred."

"Then I will, for your sake;" and, with a sudden resolution, Snowdrop turned round, held out her snowy hand to the Hail, and said:

"Here is my hand, you shall have it; but not yet, one month I ask for grace; come this day month and Snowdrop shall be ready for you."

The Hailstorm blustered and stamped with joy, and squeezed the little hand almost to atoms; he begged hard to be allowed to come in a week, but it was of no avail. Snowdrop said in a month, wished him good-bye, and sent him away. Off he went, with a bow to the King, tearing along as if a very storm were rushing down, and after him went his satellites sneezing and puffing, shaking and tumbling helter-skelter, without order and dignity.

Sweet little Snowdrop leant her head on her father's arm, looked up into his clear eyes, and sighed: "Father dear, it will be so hard to live there, it will be so different from what it is here. Are you sure there is no help?"

"None, my child, unless you wish your father to break his royal word; I chose the Hail for his many good qualities, and you will see, he will make you happy."

"But will my aunt, the Hoarfrost approve of it?" asked Snowdrop.

"Your aunt has many ridiculous fancies, and is always

shilly-shallying with the mild weather and the warm seasons. I wish she would not interfere at all, as she cannot alter matters."

"But she is so kind to me?"

"By far too much so. If she vexes me, she shall not be asked to the wedding."

With these words the Snow King lifted his royal head, made a sign to Snowdrop to withdraw, and nodding round his court, called out: "And now to business." The curls shook, and here and there and everywhere clouds of snow arose and off they flew with them, to pour them on the snow-capped Alps and the grey Pyrenees, on the old Ural and the green Apennines, on the Scotch mountains and the Norwegian fields, on palace and cottage, on spire and hamlet, till the work was done.

Snowdrop retired, followed by her maidens, deeply sorrowing to leave her home so soon. "But one month, one month," she sighed wearily, "and I shall be the wife of that horrid blusterer."

As she sat that evening by the casement in her glistening chamber, leaning her pretty head on her hands and gazing far, far away, down to Norway's northern points, where her aunt, the Hoarfrost lived, there came a tap, tap, on the silvery pane, that brought a bright smile to her lips.

"My messenger-bird, my messenger-bird," she exclaimed joyously, and quickly opened the casement to let him in.

Snow-white, with long broad feathers and wings, his head tipped with the blue shimmer of the North Pole, and his eyes shining forth like the aurora borealis of his northern home, the bird flew in, and rested on Snowdrop's shoulder, pecking her dimpled cheek, and twittering sweet words of love, sent to Snowdrop by her aunt, the Hoarfrost.

"And how is aunty?" said Snowdrop. "Do you know, my

messenger-bird, that I shall be sent up to the Hail in a month, to be his bride, and live with that vulgar noisy Prince? Go tell my gentle aunt, and ask her a favour for me."

"Twitter, twitter," was the bird's reply; "your aunt has heard of it. For the Hail came crushing by, and took time to tell your aunt of his success, and to laugh at her, for having wished you to marry the Dew. A ridiculous marriage, said he, for you never would have lived in those southern climes."

"Ah, but I should," said Snowdrop, "for my mother came from there; she was a child of the Glaciers, and so sweet, that the courtiers when out with the snow-flakes, caught her up and brought her home to my father. Her nature has a share in mine, and I only half belong to the regions up here."

"Well, and what is your aunt to do?" twittered the bird.

"To help me to visit those places in the south, where my mother came from; I long for them night and day. I dream of them, and think of them, and mourn for them; and if I could but once see them, I should be contented and resigned to my fate, and marry that dreadful Hail."

"Very well, very well, I will go and ask. Wait here, I shall soon be back." And flip-flap, went the messenger-bird, some hundred miles in a minute.

Little Snowdrop sat, and sat: she sent her maidens away and would not stir; she told them to go and gambol with the flakes, and she would call them bye-and-bye. Hours had passed, and Snowdrop's eyelids had just closed, when tap, tap, the bird came back and woke her. He flew on Snowdrop's shoulder, and flapped his broad wings round her, as though in great joy. Snowdrop scarcely knew what to make of it, so excited he was.

"What is it, my bird?" she said.

"Twitter, twitter," he answered, "your aunt has sent a parcel, and here it is," he said, as he dropped it from under his wing; "and you are to have your way, and come on my wings over to her. She will send you to the south with me, if you will promise to be punctually back in a month, and not tell the Snow King, your father, who would never allow it."

"I am sure," said Snowdrop, "it is very wrong to disobey my father, but he is so hard about this marriage, and I do long to see my mother's lands; so I will leave word where I am gone to, and that I shall be back in time to marry that horrid Hail, and perhaps the King will not be angry, and forgive me. Look here, dear bird, what I have got, it is one of my father's curls: I cut it off to-day on the sly, thinking somehow I might want it. And you see I was right, for if I hang it out and shake it, no one will find out that I am gone, till I am far away, and I will send a few words to my father on one of your feathers."

Snowdrop knelt down, picked out a feather and wrote a few words upon it. She wrapped herself in the quilt of eider-down, sent by her aunt, and as she rested on the bird's outstretched wings, she fastened the King's curl to the casement and shook it, when the flakes rushed down in whirls, and clouds, and streams, and the bird with Snowdrop on his back passed out unseen.

The people on earth wondered where so much snow came from that winter, and could not understand the reason of it.

The gentle Hoarfrost received her niece with open arms, as the bird brought her in swift flight to her dwelling. It was not so majestic a palace as that of the Snow King, but a stately residence for all that; a little more southerly, and

built of crisp columns, whose sharp edges glimmered in the half light that surrounded them. Showers of white frost fell around, and caused an external brightness to rest on the fairy dwelling. The Hoarfrost was a widow, and had received her calling from her husband, who—not content with the mild work he had to do—had wandered forth to the icefields, to fetch a keener atmosphere, that he might send a more powerful frost on the earth, and had been punished for his presumption. He had lost his strength in the attempt to reach the eternal icefields, and had dwindled down to the cold breath that leaves the silver flowers on the window panes in severe wintry weather, bequeathing to his wife the business of the hoarfrost showers.

The Hoarfrost was delighted to see Snowdrop, and gave her strict instructions how to proceed, as she was well acquainted with the South, where she often sent messengers to leave her shining, tiny crystals on field, meadow, and garden. The messenger-bird was to take Snowdrop on earth, and transform himself into her guardian; one hoarfrost crystal would be sufficient every day to yield untold worldly treasures, and every evening the bird was to come back to the Hoarfrost, to fetch the morning draught of the ethereal atmosphere for Snowdrop, that her northern nature might not suffer; as each morning arrived on earth, the bird should be back to protect his charge.

"Your father will be very angry with me, dear Snowdrop," said the Hoarfrost, "but I loved your mother and know what she suffered, when she was brought up here, and I know also that she died of a broken heart, because your father would never let her go south again; she passed away, and all that remained of her on earth was the soft sheen on the frozen mere in the winter-time. Your

father always looks down and sighs when that time comes, and brings back the remembrance of his sweet wife. And now, my darling niece, time is pressing, so be off, and mind you come back punctually. The messenger-bird is very wise, and I trust to him to bring you back safe and in time, for I shall have a fearful message to-morrow from your father, and I know, that for this year, he will spoil my work, and remain so long on earth, that I shall have nothing to do."

So off swooped the beautiful bird with his lovely burden, all the way down from space towards the earth, in broad flights. When they neared Norway and Sweden the sun was just rising and shedding a pale golden light on those northern lands. The bird set Snowdrop down on the Norwegian fields, wrapped her up in her quilt, and went forward to make preparations for her. The box of hoarfrost globules yielded perfect treasures of gold, and whoever possesses that, can easily supply his necessities. The messenger-bird in an instant changed himself into a stately old gentleman, and walked with a heavy purse into the town. Here he bought horses, engaged attendants, and hired the best house he could get. He then walked out again, and changed himself back into the bird, found Snowdrop fast asleep, and carried her on his back into one of the top windows of the house. Aunt Hoarfrost had sent her son the Fog, to envelope the earth for a few hours, and so no one saw the arrival of the two.

The King of Norway was just going out to hunt, when he heard that a beautiful Princess had arrived, who had taken a large house, plenty of retainers and attendants, horses, falcons, and all that was required for the state of so great a lady; she had arrived the day before with her guardian, and there was nothing like her in the whole land. The King became very anxious to see this strange princess, and

sent his chamberlain to pay his respects to her. Snowdrop, a thousand times more lovely as an earthly maiden, than she had been as a fairy princess, shone in all her beauty, as she received the messenger from the king. She was dressed in a sky-blue robe, trimmed with beautiful swansdown, and her grace was such, and her winning ways so enticing, that the poor old man's head was turned, and he hurried off to tell the king that nothing lived on earth half so beautiful as the Princess Snowdrop. The King, a smart young fellow, who believed that every fair damsel would fall in love with him, came with all his retinue and carried his head very arrogantly; but, when he saw Snowdrop, he was abashed, and bent a knee before her. He forgot to ask about the country she came from, but made such love to her, that Snowdrop became quite confused, and did not know what to say. She promised the King to go hunting with him, and a splendid day they had. Snowdrop looked so lovely in her hunting habit, and her hat, and plumes, that the King would have laid down his life for her. In the evening a great entertainment was given at the palace, and Snowdrop, accompanied by her old guardian, graced it with her presence, dressed in silver gauze, that shone like the rays of the moon, and having in her waving curls three of her aunt's hoar globules, that gleamed like the handsomest diamonds men had ever seen.

The Princess left early, accompanied by her guardian, and the King went with her to the foot of the stairs, telling her that he should come next day to lay his crown at her feet. But the next day came, and with it the news that the Princess was gone, and that she had departed for the south. The King was disconsolate, and would not go out hunting for one whole year, moping his time away till he had to go to war in right earnest against the Danes.

Snowdrop went off with her dear messenger-bird, who faithfully brought the draught every morning before she rose; they travelled alone, but swifter than other folks, as the bird took Snowdrop on his wings and soon covered the distance from one country to another. Snowdrop had not much liked Norway; she said it was not cold enough for the northern regions, and not warm enough for the south, and the people were so big and heavy. England she did not care to see, for she said her cousin, the Fog, was so fond of it, that he was always wrapping it up in his mantle, and she might come just at that time, when it would be very dull and dreary. Germany she was afraid to visit, for there were so many princes at the time warring against each other, that the country was full of bloodshed, and what should she do, if one drop of blood got on her snowrobe, it never could be rubbed out again. They went off to Paris, therefore, to see France. Snowdrop had heard that the people here were gay and lively, and seemed to have no cares, and held great tournaments and rejoicings all the year round. It was not at all difficult to get into the town, there was such a rush about the place, and so many strangers coming and going. In a day or two Snowdrop and her guardian were ensconced in one of the old palaces, which no one inhabited, and surrounded by quite a royal state. When all was ready, Snowdrop rode out on horseback with her guardian, and caused such a commotion, that the news spread over the whole city, the most beauteous princess ever seen had arrived. The same evening, the King, the Queen, and the Dauphin, sent each a chamberlain to bid Princess Snowdrop welcome, and to beg of her to grace the tournament the next day, with her presence, and be the Queen of Beauty. Snowdrop consented to appear, and sent the chamberlains home, full of her beauty, her nobility, and goodness.

The day of the tournament arrived, and "La Princesse du Nord," as Snowdrop was called in Paris, appeared on her snow-white charger, dressed in a suit of the richest velvet, and having on her head the prettiest velvet cap and white plume. Her guardian, a respectable old gentleman, rode by her side, a good contrast, and every eye turned on them as they entered the ranks and ascended the tribune. The King welcomed them, the Queen made room for Snowdrop, but the Dauphin was nowhere to be seen. The new Princess outshone indeed all earthly queens in beauty; her grace was inimitable, and her smiles cheered every one on whom she looked. The trumpets sounded, the heralds appeared, and the combatants entered the lists; but looking up at the tribune of the court ladies, and seeing the lovely Princess, all became confused. No one could keep his place, and there was much merriment caused by the awkward thrusts and the ridiculous manœuvres, and Snowdrop did think it a droll way to carry on a tournament. Presently one knight appeared dressed in blue to oppose another in black: both fought fiercely, but when the knight in blue had gained the day, he bent a knee before Snowdrop and presented her with his trophy, requesting her before the whole assembly to accept it and also his heart. The Queen rose and kissed Snowdrop, and begged of her not to refuse it, but to return to the palace with them, where a great banquet was served. The Dauphin did not know but that the Princess had accepted him, and was happy beyond earthly bliss. However, the evening came, and Snowdrop retired early with her guardian, promising to allow the Dauphin to visit her next morning. When the morning came, and the Dauphin arrived at the palace, as soon as etiquette permitted, he found, to his sorrow, that the Princess was gone, and had left with her guardian for the south. He was so disappointed and

vexed that he went home, and out of spite married the ugliest Princess ever seen, that had just arrived at the Court, but with a tremendous large dowry of her own.

Snowdrop, looking down upon the countries she had passed, from the broad wings of the beautiful bird, saw the olive gardens of France and the vine-clad hills of the Rhine, and passed down to Switzerland, where her mother's home had been; but here the bird became cautious that Snowdrop's uncles, aunts, and cousins, the Glaciers, should not see her and draw her down to remain with him. Snowdrop begged hard to be allowed to have a chat with them, but the bird knew better, and passed on over the Alps into that lovely Peninsula that seems to be a very favourite child of her mother Europa.

This was the land she wanted to see, said Snowdrop, here the sky was blue and limpid, here the sun shone in regal splendour, here nature was luxuriant and generous. This was the land she should like to inhabit and pass her days in, and not with that horrid blusterer, the Hail, up in the windy, stormy North, where all was rough and noisy. Who could relate how that Snowdrop visited Genoa la Superba, and bathed in the blue waters of the Mediterranean; how she was carried down to ancient Rome, and wandered over its many hills; how she went back to purse-proud Venice, and turned the head of the Doge himself; how she sailed at last down to graceful Naples, and here was captivated beyond measure by the beauty of the land and the splendour of the skies.

But warnings came little by little. Snowdrop's health was not so good, her head began to droop, and her eyelids were heavy. The messenger-bird began to warn her that the last week of her absence had arrived, and that they must return speedily, to be back in time, and to regain the northern

health and energy. Snowdrop would not hear, a mad desire possessed her to cross the Mediterranean and touch the land beyond, and that desire she determined to satisfy, with or without the permission of the messenger-bird. One night, when he had taken his flight to the North, to fetch the draught, she ordered her state gondola and went away splash, splash, over the still waters to the nearest point of scorching Africa. Here, her father's enemy, the Sirocco Wind, had heard of her arrival, and profited by it to return an old grudge to the Snow King. One hot breath sufficed to taint poor Snowdrop, when she had set foot on the Sirocco's dominion, and her life was stricken down. The messenger-bird, madly looking for her, just arrived to catch her on his wings and reach her the ethereal draught, but in vain. She smiled drearily, shook her head, and whispered: "Home!" —and exerting all his strength, the bird sped on, and on, from the south to the north in but few hours, till they reached the Hoarfrost's dwelling. She had already heard of it from the Southwind, that met one of her messengers on the way, and was disconsolate, wringing her hands, and vainly regreting her culpable indulgence of Snowdrop's whims. One gentle kiss she gave the stricken child, and bade the bird speed on to the home of the Snow King, that he might at least, once more see his darling. Swoop, swoop, swoop, the bird arrived and carried his sweet burden right to the royal throne. The Snow King cognisant of his misfortune, had covered his face, and sat sorrowing and mourning, and when his child was laid faint and dying in his arms, he heaved a great sigh that shook the northern regions and the earth. Snowdrop just opened her eyes and wound her arms, as of old, round her father, and then having received his last kiss, she wasted, and wasted, and wasted away, till less and less remained of her, and all that was left at last was an ethereal

drop, that mixing with one big tear from the Snow King's clear eyes, fell upon the earth, and there took root and bloomed, as a remembrance of that sweet northern child—and when one of our ancestors went next day into his snow-covered garden, he saw the little white head, and plucked the first white snowdrop,—a new and gentle gift to man of hope and coming spring.

And the poor blustering but faithful Hail never married, but remains a rough bachelor to this day.

THE PASHA'S HAREM.

I.

THE NEW ARRIVAL.

ONE balmy evening in the early spring a boat was silently gliding over the blue waters of the Bosphorus. Its smartly-dressed rowers kept even but subdued time, and scarcely ventured to murmur a word as they swiftly passed the gay palaces of many a Pasha, high in favour with his Sultan. The six young men were not alone: at one end of the boat, under an awning, a group could be dimly discerned, composed of two Turkish ladies, with ample wrappings, so as to leave it doubtful of what undefinable age they could be, and what features could be thus shrouded; and of a middle-aged man, who stood with folded arms at some distance from them, gazing dreamily on the dancing waves, as the boat cut the pretty ripples. Swifter and swifter they passed on, and did not slacken their speed, till a signal was given by the man, who, the same moment, whispered to one of the females the ds, "Prepare, we draw nigh." An inclination of the

head from the one and a moan from the other were the only replies. Another signal, and the boat stopped at the low wall of a garden attached to as splendid a palace as any they had yet passed—coloured lamps shed a soft brilliancy over both garden and house; the bright waters—bright from the reflec- of the light—washed the marble steps, and the whole rose from the half-darkness like a phantom habitation of happy beings.

A slight whistle from the man announced the arrival to some one within, and was instantly answered by a door in the wall being thrown open, and by the appearance of two men, dressed in the style of superior servants. Both carried lanterns: descended, and assisted the ladies up the steps. The man who had accompanied the latter waved his hand and dismissed the boatmen, who pulled round and disappeared noiselessly. When the door of the garden closed on the five persons, a sixth, an elderly female, appeared, and beckoned the ladies to follow her. Up they passed, through the mysteriously-lighted avenues, scented by the early blossoms of orange and jassmine trees, and reached the palace, where two more servants were stationed with lamps, one of these the elderly woman took from the bearer, as both men turned their faces to the wall on seeing the ladies, crossed the corridor with a quick step, pressed a part of the wall before her, which yielded and revealed a magnificent staircase, and ushered her companions into the Harem of Aali Pasha's palace. A hum of sweet voices swam in the air, and instinctively one of the ladies clung to the other, who shook her head disapprovingly. They followed their guide to the next room on the right, which seemed the general reception room, and revelled in the splendour of eastern riches. Red silk damask curtains shaded the interior from the light without, divans, covered with the same material and heaped with luxurious cushions, surrounded

the room, pictures adorned the walls, a marble fountain of exquisite shape played in graceful showers, throwing delicious coolness around, and the thick-woven bright carpet hid the noise of every footstep, while two candelabras of massive silver relieved the pompous beauty of its decorations.

The elderly female bent low before both ladies, invited them to a seat, and said gently:

"One hour is left to you for the words of separation, then I will return, conduct *you* to your companions; and you,"—turning to the other—"back to the boat, which will again be in waiting."

She withdrew, but instantly returned with a silver tray, covered with a linen cloth of extreme fineness, embroidered in gold, and bearing on it the refreshments of the east: delicious sweets, fruits, and slices of fine bread. Again she disappeared. Both ladies threw aside their wrappings, and there stood the Circassian mother and her lovely daughter.

"Mother, mother, will you indeed leave me? Must I be torn from all I love, to become one of the many wives of this Pasha?"

"Eufrazine, my child, you make your family's fortune by it. Your father is already provided for by the Pasha, who, you know, came from our own Circassian village, and rose so high by fortune's favour; your brother will soon get a lucrative place at Pera, your youngest brother be placed in one of the military schools, your sisters be sought by others as sister beauties of the wife of Aali Pasha, and your own mother be proud of her offspring."

"But, mother, why might I not stay with you, share with you the simple happy home Eman offers me, and remain among our own people and customs, a contented daughter and blessed wife?"

"No, child, you do not understand it; and your parents must ask for obedience. Your lover will soon be consoled."

Eufrazine wept, sobbed, and implored her mother on her knees, but to no purpose. The hour had passed, neither had touched the refreshments, and both were excited far beyond eastern habits, when the elderly woman reappeared.

"Hush, hush," she exclaimed, as she saw Eufrazine's grief, "cover your face and follow me. Let not these sounds be heard: they might be reported to higher ears."

One more embrace—one clinging embrace, and the young girl left the mother, who so ill understood her happiness, again crossed the corridor with her guide, ascended the staircase and was ushered into a large spacious saloon, where merry and gentle voices mingled in chorus to welcome her.

The room was lighter and brighter in appearance than the one below; but a peculiar haziness, caused by scents, that floated in the air, gave it a dreamy appearance. On Eufrazine's entrance, the girls, in various styles of beauty and dress, hurried up and pressed round her. No envy was on their faces, eagerly they seized her hands: one took off her shawls, another brought cushions for her, a third presented rose-water and fine napkins to refresh her face and hands, a fourth gently smoothed her soft hair, and all were eager to do her some slight service. And when disrobed of the numerous wrappings, she stood before them with the true classical impress of Circassian feature and mould, none repressed the admiration they felt at such a costly prize having been brought to share their home. The bending willow could not more gracefully have swept the waters, than did the Circassian's neck bend over the sweet faces on their knees before her, as she cast grateful but mournful glances on those, whose fate she did not envy.

Again the elderly female appeared, and bidding the girls gently not to harass their friend too much, she told her that a room for herself was prepared, and that she could

retire, when she desired it. But so hard pleaded the large eyes around her, that Eufrazine yielded some time longer to their winning ways, and listened to song and lyre to drive away her own unhappy thoughts.—When at last, from long weeping the day before, her eyelids became heavy, they took her into an adjoining chamber, where a luxurious divan, whose coverlets of satin were to cover her weary frame, waited for her.

II.

THE SICK ROOM IN THE HAREM.

Eufrazine was told on retiring that she would the next day have the honour of appearing before His Highness the Pasha, and that several of her companions would come and assist at her toilet, so as to prepare her worthily for her first introduction. She earnestly begged to be left in her plain home dress, as indeed she wished to appear in none other before Aali Pasha, whom, on account of his age, she must regard more as a father than a lover or husband; but she was not understood, and shaking their heads incredulously, they brought and showed her the costly dresses and jewels, prepared already for her.

Oh, that night, that first night under a roof, which was to rob her of all thoughts of happiness! Poor Eufrazine, when even weariness would steal over her, wild dreams that her Circassian lover hunted through the village for her in mad despair, roused her up again, till, towards dawn, her brain throbbed and fever heat rushed through her veins. When

morning came at last, and the matting that parted her room from the rest was pushed aside and the elderly woman, whose name she had heard was Mira, came to her bedside, Eufrazine was but half conscious of her presence, and on trying to arouse herself sufficiently to rise, she found it impossible.

Mira was in despair, when she saw her young charge's burning cheeks, restless eye, and heaving bosom. What was to be done?—She loudly called upon Allah to assist her in her hour of distress, for before Aali she must bring the Circassian beauty that day! Her cries and sobs woke a chorus of young voices, and suddenly a dozen little beings, girls and boys, rushed into the room. Such fine bright eyes, such rounded limbs, such pretty pattering feet, such picturesque dresses! In a moment they took hold of Mira's hands and begged her to be comforted. What was the matter?

"Away, away, little ones, you will disturb the stranger!" exclaimed Mira. Then they saw Eufrazine, crouched down by her, kissed her hands, smoothed her coverlets, and rushed away again to spread the news in the Harem: "The strange lady, who came last night, is ill!"

At once two or three of last night's acquaintance hurried to Mira's assistance, and equally bewailed the great misfortune; but something more must be done. So, first one hurried for cooling drinks, another for rose-water to wash her temples, a third refreshed the room by allowing the mild air to pass freely, and the last merely held Eufrazine's burning hand in hers. Amidst such tender cares the hour was drawing nigh when the Pasha would expect to see his new bride, and no amendment could be seen, on the contrary, the patient had refused all nourishment, and was beginning to speak incoherently. Mira was disconsolate; she must make the state of things known to her master, and what

would be the consequence: he surely would think it was her fault. At last a resolution had to be made; so she left Eufrazine in charge of two Greek girls, and hurried into the corridor below. Here she pressed the wall again, and passed into the outer hall; instantly a negro was by her side, a few words were whispered to him, and nodding his head he skipped away. Mira waited but some moments, when the same man appeared, whom we met in the boat, dressed in handsome Turkish costume, and announced as the Kiaja, and highest person near the Pasha.

"And why am I sent for, Mira," he said, "would no one else have done as well?"

"No, Kiaja," she replied; "the Circassian whom you brought from her native village is ill, very ill. My skill will not suffice; and you must send His Highness's Italian doctor, and acquaint Aali Pasha that the stranger cannot appear before him."

"By Allah, thy tongue lies!" cried the Kiaja.

"Remember who I was, and that my word has still some weight," proudly answered Mira; "and if you must be convinced by sight, you may accompany the Pasha's doctor." So saying she returned the same way she had came, without waiting for a reply, and re-entered Eufrazine's room.

Wildly the poor girl now tossed on her pillow; the others were weeping bitterly by her, but Mira sent them away under different pretences, and said she would alone nurse Eufrazine, directing them to keep close in their own rooms when the strange doctor came. Sorrowing they departed, hushing all they met, and retreating behind mattings and screens.

Mira fetched more soft white muslin veils, and covered Eufrazine's head and face, so that no feature could be seen; then with beating heart she awaited the arrival of the visitors

so seldom seen in the Harem. A slight knock at the outer door told her that they had come. She hurried to open it, and admitted the Kiaja, the Interpreter, and the Italian. Behind the matting, leading to another room there were bright eyes looking out stealthily to see the stranger, whom openly they dare not face. Mira shook her head disapprovingly, and the matting was quickly let down.

The doctor approached the divan, and carefully examined the patient. Mira bending over her with a mother's affection, ever covered the other features when he felt the throbbing brow, or glowing cheek, or saw the parched lip; leaving but the eyes free to be seen from beyond the veil. Both male companions of the doctor had to turn their faces to the wall. Bleeding was ordered; it was against the rules of their religion, but Mira consented to it. Eufrazine's beautiful arm was bared, and the warm blood streamed forth. Exhausted, she lay like a covered marble statue, so motionless and still did she appear. They left, the Kiaja convinced that illness existed, and the doctor giving directions to tend the patient carefully. When again alone, Mira, whose very heart-strings had been touched, wept bitter tears over her sick charge. "Thy grief I know," she exclaimed, "they brought me here thus, in my youth and beauty, to be but one among many, when I might have reigned supreme in a noble heart! Oh, Allah! save her from her cruel fate!"

Eufrazine opened her eyes and looked on her with grateful, returning consciousness, but still too weak to speak.

"Be quiet, child, we must not converse," Mira whispered; and softly clapped her hands, and, as if by magic, there appeared a dozen bright faces, all eager to help: some reclined by the divan to fan the cool air into the patient's face; others brought busily lighter coverlets; one lovely

Greek sprinkled scented water about the room, another graceful beauty placed a few flowers round, and all offered sisterly love where the world would have expected nothing but envy and jealousy. The little chorus of pattering feet was again heard; they crept in silently, and when they had kissed the small white hand disappeared as quickly. Though many of her companions were present, Eufrazine's room was in a few minutes as still as if no breath moved around her. The rich blossoms of eastern vegetation bore their incense through the half-opened blinds into the room, the low murmuring waves that kissed the steps of the dwelling which held so sweet a being, brought stillness to the soul, and the angel of peace spread his soft mantle in pity over the devoted creatures of the eastern faith, and hushed them and the treasure they watched over into gentle sleep.

III.

THE PASHA'S DEATH.

The next morning Mira found Eufrazine although much exhausted, yet by far less feverish, and she did not regret the night she had spent by her side. She kept off all intruders, and deputed the business and work of the Harem to its younger inmates, determined to watch her beautiful countrywoman herself. Towards mid-day, a hand silently lifted the matting and the disturbed countenance of a young girl beckoned to Mira to come. She obeyed the

summons, and heard that the negro in attendance on the Harem had just brought the news that the Pasha's slight cold had so increased since the night before, that he was considered in danger. The girl who gave Mira this information, wept at the idea that their protector might be taken from them.

Mira felt deeply hurt, she tightly grasped the arm of her who had brought the news: "Aali Pasha in danger, sayest thou? Go and pray in the Harem to Allah to preserve him who was your kind lord and master! In an hour return to watch by the stranger, and I will enquire further."

Mira sat with drooping head near the divan, lost in reflections, recollections, and deep thought, when a tap at the outer door roused her. She hurried there, opened it, and found the negro, who told her that the Kiaja was to accompany her to the Pasha, as he was rapidly growing worse and wished to see her.

"And could I not appear before my lord and master alone?" she asked.

"These are my orders," replied the negro, and left her.

Mira's lip curled; she hastened back to see that Eufrazine was guarded, threw the finest veil at hand over her own noble figure, and rapidly passed on through the corridor, pressed the wall, entered the outer hall, and here found the Kiaja waiting.

"Eh, Mira, thy master desireth to speak with thee, perhaps some early remembrance of thy beauty has occasioned this desire," he said tauntingly.

"Kiaja, I seek no explanation from thee; Aali Pasha is ill, that is sufficient reason for me to obey."

The Pasha's rooms might have been reached by another door in the Harem, but Mira did not desire her errand to be

known among its inmates, and therefore preferred to enter by the principal entrance of the palace. Here three or four servants were lounging about, and instantly turned their faces to the wall on seeing Mira, who was, however, privileged to move freely about. In the hall stood a large iron pan, which even at this time contained burning coals; and around it more people lounged, smoking pipes and drinking coffee. These also showed respect to both passers by, who suddenly came to a part in the wall that was opened in slides by two negroes, and showed the magnificent staircase, worked in brass work, gilt over, and covered in the middle by a carpet rich beyond description. They reached the first chamber, whose splendour could only be imagined by those who know Eastern luxuriousness. Simplicity of taste reigned together with grandeur: marble, gold and silver, carpets, divans, hangings of the richest textures and embroidered in gold composed, together with massive crystal candelabras, a scene rivalling in description the Persian tales. Mira and the Kiaja moved on more cautiously; two servants stationed at the entrance of the next room slowly lifted the hangings that shrouded its interior, and admitted them.

There he lay, the old Pasha, on a divan, which alone with its soft down cushions, would have taken up the room of two northern bedrooms. The proud man had a noble countenance, and, though he had already reached his seventy-second year, a vigorous frame; his official anxieties, an unusual occurrence among his lazier brethren, had began to break up his robust constitution. A long white beard reached far down on his breast, as he lay reclining on the cushions of the divan. What a tale of varied fortunes, of power, self-will, and grasping ambition, would this old man's history have given, but who would judge him otherwise than by the standard of an Eastern Pasha!

Mira approached, bending her head low, and kissing the robe of her master. He was assisted to rise by the Italian doctor, and with enfeebled voice called her to him.

"Mira, thou wast ever a faithful being to me. Thy son died, else he should have been the inheritor of part of my wealth; as it is, I, who stole thee from thy Circassian home, thank thee, when nearly dying, and will grant any favour thou mayest desire."

"Aali Pasha," sobbed Mira, "let me return to my home, and end my days there."

"So be it," he replied, "although it is against the dignity of the former wife of a Pasha."

"Oh, might I ask another favour, great and noble Aali? Grant her, who was also brought from her Circassian home but two days ago, her freedom with me! She has been torn from her lover!"

"Kiaja, this thou knewest, not I," said the Pasha angrily; "and in thy presence I promise Mira, that the young Circassian shall leave with her, should Allah ask my life. Now, leave me, Mira!" And he beckoned an adieu to her.

Once more Mira kissed her master's robe, and closely veiling her face, left her dying lord, to hurry to the Harem and bring life to at least one being there.

His many younger children Aali Pasha had no wish to see, his two elder sons were away, and so the great, wealthy, and powerful man, lay waiting for death, merely surrounded by calculating strangers and servants, who could not minister to the feelings of his heart in his dying hour.

IV.

THE ESCAPE.

The Pasha was dead. Cries, sobs, and moans, were heard in the Harem, and stillness reigned in the other part of the palace. Mira had communicated the news of her release to Eufrazine the same evening, when she found her strong enough to listen to her. Warm, grateful tears were her thanks! But Eufrazine also told her that a plan had already been arranged between her and her brother, that when she had openly told the Pasha of her former engagement, and he released her not, she should try to escape into the garden the fourth night, and he would venture his life to save her from her sad fate. The next night would be the fourth, and they might quietly meet her brother and trust to his guidance. Mira would rather have left that very day, but Eufrazine implored her to remain till night, as she did not know what might become of her brother.

Eufrazine had brought no treasures with her, but Mira was busy in arranging some valuable jewels, which remained dear to her as presents from former times. Money she refused, a sum she had sent formerly to her relations at home would be sufficient for her. The Kiaja had promised conveyances to Constantinople, and there Mira would meet a trusty friend; the two ladies would not acquaint him with the plan of the night escape, and it was apparently determined that they should leave the next morning.

Eufrazine, still very weak, could hardly bear the suspense, and sat cowering on her divan, little noticing the mourning groups around her; time passed on, night came, and with it again her feverish anxiety. Mira stole up to her: "It is all prepared," she whispered, "at eleven o'clock, when the first sleep has stolen over them, we will be in the garden. I have still the pass-key."

Night had with its peculiar eastern loveliness rested on the Bosphorus, when again a boat passed rapidly to the marble stairs of Aali Pasha's palace; again, six silent rowers sped it on, but this time accompanied by two men in earnest conversation. They stopped, alighted, whistled, and the door in the wall opened. They entered, and the boat was moored noiselessly alongside. It was eleven o'clock; Mira and Eufrazine had just entered the garden, closely wrapped up, the former carrying a valuable casket. They heard men's voices and tried to hide behind the thick green bushes. They remained unnoticed, but themselves became aware, that the Kiaja was one of those who passed them. Mira became anxious; his presence here boded no good. What could he be about in the garden of the harem at that hour? They crouched, and crept to the place where they expected Eufrazine's brother would be able to land and scale the wall, and with beating hearts they counted every second as an age. Here they waited about half-an-hour, when lights suddenly appeared in the garden, which had this night not been illuminated by the lamps, and anxious voices were heard. At last they distinguished that of the Kiaja.

"They have gone, they have fled before the time; it is Mira who did not trust me. She had the key; but where can they be gone without protection?"

"Let us search the garden," said the negro who attended the Harem; "they may be hidden here."

"You are right, black one," replied the Turk; and immediately both, together with the stranger, began to search.

The ladies lay almost flat on the ground, trembling with anxiety; but of what avail? They were found; and the Kiaja hoarsely whispered to Mira: "You have often foiled me; but not this time. You may depart, as you are old and worthless; I will see you safe to Constantinople. This one here I have sold to the Sultan's Harem, and the trusty messenger is here to receive her."

Who shall describe Eufrazine's writhing agony? So near deliverance to be thrown back into the black gulf of despair! but Mira did not lose her self-possession.

"I go with thee, my child, perhaps there is still help."

"None," replied the Kiaja, "the boat is ready."

To open the door, to carry off Eufrazine and Mira down the steps into the boat, occupied but a few moments, and again the rowers were about to pull round; when, hark! what sound was that? Another boat rapidly approached. It stopped; two rowers and two men wrapped in cloaks were in it. They bent over, and for an instant, both boats scanned each other breathlessly, when a piercing scream from Eufrazine rent the air, and the words burst from her lips:

"Brother, save me! save me! They take me to the Sultan's Harem. The Pasha is dead!"

"Down with the girl," cried the Kiaja. "Pull off men; quick, by Allah!"

But a vigorous arm hurled him down; a manly form had, quick as lightning, rushed into their boat; Eufrazine was snatched up, handed to some one else in the other boat; Mira clinging to him was also thrust into the next boat—all within an instant—and the young man, as he jumped back, exclaimed:

"Allah's curse on ye, ye thieves! Pull off, men!"

The boat rushed headlong to the other side, leaving the six rowers and the stranger powerless with astonishment, the Kiaja in the boat, stunned by the blow, and Eufrazine safe in her lover's arms!

HUGH MELTON.

HUGH MELTON and I were College chums. We came up together to Oxford, and managed together to convince the Examiners that we were fit and proper persons to be matriculated at —— College. From that time, as if united by the peculiar bond of union that brings freshmen together, we had been close friends. Hugh, who was about six months my senior, was rather above the medium height, had a dark complexion, brown curly hair, slight moustache and whiskers, but was chiefly remarkable for his beautiful blue eyes, which always looked into your face with such bright and happy meaning, as if deceit or sorrow were entirely foreign to their owner's nature. As regards myself, I suppose I was neither handsome nor plain, rather slightly built, and very fair. We made but few friends in our first term, and as our rooms happened to be opposite one another, we were continually together, and after dinner in hall would often sit before the fire and talk about home and our hopes and fears: fears mainly directed to the awful examination then hanging over both of us, to wit, "Smalls;" and, as if to increase our faith in ourselves, we would recount how this

or that great man had failed to pass, I'm sure I don't know how often.

Well, time went on; and, after a good deal of plodding and thinking and trembling, we both found ourselves on the eve of the examination. Hugh, I'm sorry to say, hadn't worked quite so much as he might have done, though he read pretty steadily at night, went to lectures punctually, and didn't come to grief with the authorities about attendance at chapel, yet he would indulge in a most peculiar antipathy to rats, and, as he had a very fine little terrier, spent an immense amount of his time in hunting, baiting, and otherwise tormenting those unfortunate animals. As we sat opposite one another that evening, Hugh, who appeared to be in a brown study, suddenly said, "I say, Charley, if we get through this blessed Exam., I mean to take you home to spend the Vac. with me."

I did not know quite what to answer, as the proposition appeared to disclose to me a happiness I had never dreamt of. Poor, and an orphan, I should only go to an old maiden aunt, who lived in strict seclusion, to spend my vacation, where I could have no hope of society or pleasure. So I said with some eagerness:

"Oh, Hugh, wouldn't it be jolly!"

"I should rather think it would," said Hugh. So the matter was looked upon as settled.

I have even now a dim recollection that my dreams that night were most confused: Examiners, pretty girls, Hugh, Hugh's mother and sister, College Dons, my old maiden aunt, all appeared to be mixed up in one huge indeterminable dance. I don't remember quite how we all went down to supper; but at supper Hugh and I were told that we had passed our Exam., and that we were a credit to our country, our ancestors, and ourselves. Then the dance began

again, and the port bottle appeared to make love to the cigar box, and the coal-scuttle flirted with the bed curtains, and all seemed getting into an inextricable muddle, when I was aroused by some one calling out, "It's half-past seven, Sir, and if you don't make haste you'll be too late for chapel." Out I jumped, and, almost upsetting that devoted servant, my scout, began rapidly to dress. Hugh that morning breakfasted with me, and about half-past nine we both put on our white ties, that emblem of the wretched going to be tortured, and proceeded towards the large building known as the "Schools," where we were both going to be examined. We said nothing. Hugh perhaps repented that he had not read harder, I, in turn, hoping against hope that I had read hard enough. We went in, sat down in our appointed seats, received our printed examination papers, and set to work. Thus we continued for two days, then came an interval before we were examined *vivâ voce*, at the end of which I found to my delight that I had passed, and that Hugh had scraped through also, though it was, as he said, a closeish shave.

Hugh was in ecstacies at having got through, and at the idea of going home again, while I was as anxious as he was to see the mother and sister he had talked of so much; for Hugh's father was dead. It was about half-past four in the afternoon when we moved out of the Oxford station and set out on our journey. Hugh's mother lived, he had told me, in Hampshire, on her own property, and appeared to be a lady of considerable means. We talked a good deal after starting, but soon got too sleepy, and were not disturbed till we got to Reading, where we had to change for the line that goes to the south coast. Here we nearly lost the last train as Hugh's terrier, Bob, sniffing imaginary rats, bolted away down the line, and we had to follow; at last, by dint of a

good deal of shouting and coaxing, Bob was induced to return, and we just managed to get in in time. It was, I believe, nearly eight o'clock when the train stopped at a very pretty country station, and that Hugh, popping out his head, exclaimed :

"I'm blessed if old Hall, the coachman, hasn't come himself to fetch us, and there's Mary too!"

Out he jumped, and catching a very pretty girl round the waist, gave her a hearty kiss, which I fear rather rumpled her dress, and running up to the old man he called Hall, said :

"Why, Hall, you old sinner! you look twice as jolly as you did when I left."

Seeing me standing quietly aloof, he introduced me to his sister, and talked away as fast as his tongue would let him. He told her he had passed his examination, which, had it not been for me, he never should have done; and, finally, with a heartiness that at once set us all perfectly at our ease, said :

"Now, you all know one another, and we can start home." Old Hall soon managed to get our portmanteaus and boxes into the carriage, and we all got in. Mary Melton, as far as I could see in the dark, seemed to be very much like her brother, and had the same frank and winning ways, just tempered by the well-bred modesty that is so frequently met with in the English girl of good family.

Hugh drove, and kept up a running conversation with us all. We appeared all animated with his high spirits, and laughed and talked as if we had known one another for years. Our road lay through a thickly-wooded country, more I could not make out. At length, after about three quarters of an hour's drive we entered a long avenue of

trees, at the end of which I perceived, by the bright glare from the windows, a large substantial country mansion. Hugh pulled up with a jerk, at the same time the hall-door opened, and a lady dressed in deep mourning came out, folded Hugh to her breast, and turning to me, quietly observed, as she held out both her hands:

"My dear Mr. Seton, we are very glad to see you here."

We then passed into the hall; and, after a little further conversation, Hugh and I ran upstairs to dress for dinner. Not till we were in the dining room had I an opportunity of observing Mary Melton more closely, and I was certainly astonished at her extraordinary beauty. Though, as I have said before, she was very like her brother, yet they were very different; you could scarcely have found the slightest fault with her delicate yet noble features, with her exquisite figure, and whenever she turned to speak to me, and looked at me with her large eyes, I felt my whole frame tingle, and I am sure I blushed in the most idiotic manner. The dinner passed off much as such dinners usually do; there were several other people staying in the house, and we were all very lively. Afterwards, in the drawing room, I got into conversation with Hugh's mother, and soon perceived how she adored her only son, for she spoke of scarcely anything else but of her Hugh; and I, myself, only too glad to get an opportunity of praising my dearest friend, delighted his mother, and I believe gained her affection at once. I think I afterwards got near Mary Melton, but I do not remember that I either did or said anything remarkable. About eleven o'clock we all heard a shot, followed by another. Hugh jumped up, and, going across the room to his mother, asked her what it meant, she told him she did not know in the least; he then rang the bell and told the servant to send down to the lodge in the morning, and tell the head-keeper to come up, as he wanted to speak to him.

This slight interruption seemed to throw a peculiar gloom over me, as if it foreboded some great trouble, but quickly throwing it off, I joined in the conversation which had now become general. Hugh's mother, it appeared, had the intention of giving a grand ball in honour of her son, and all the visitors present were discussing the pros and cons of the affair, and were settling who should and who shouldn't, who ought and who who oughtn't to come.

That night before going to bed, Hugh came into my room, and closing the door, said:

"Charlie, I did not like those two shots at all, I had hoped that we were rid of poachers, but it seems we are not, so I've sent for old Grimble, the head-keeper, to morrow morning, and then we'll see what is to be done."

I did not take the matter much to heart, as I was neither a good shot, nor did I care much for shooting; and had, perhaps, pretty broad ideas about poaching and the game laws, so I merely answered:

"Never mind, old man, I suppose it will be all right."

Next morning Hugh had a long conversation with Grimble, and it was determined that whenever they could get some notion of the poachers' movements, the keepers were to call for Hugh and myself, and that then we should go out and try to catch the depredators.

Several days passed, and we did nothing but amuse ourselves to our hearts' content. In the daytime we rode and drove, we shot, we hunted, we made excursions to the places of interest in the vicinity; in the evening we either got up a little dance or practised glees and part-songs, as both Hugh and his sister were skilled musicians. During all this time I felt that I was getting madly, hopelessly in love with Mary Melton. I tried to argue with myself, I represented to myself how poor, how friendless I was, how

such a marriage was utterly impossible. It was no use, I loved her, the truth would out; for although I had not detected the slightest partiality in her conduct to me, yet every one appeared to pay more deference to me as Hugh's friend, and to treat me more familiarly also. Hugh would sometimes joke me about his sister, and talk about "faint heart never won fair lady!" I am sure had he known how faint my heart was, he never would have chattered on so glibly. I do not think anything is so well adapted for flirtation and lovemaking as the quiet pleasurable country life of an English family; there are so many opportunities of being alone, people are so frequently thrown together, that, often after three weeks, everybody appears to know everybody else as well as if they were tried old friends.

Things went on like this for about a couple of weeks, when one evening, just as we were in the midst of singing a glee, we heard a knock, and old Grimble bowed and scraped himself in and said:

"I should like to speak a little to the young master?"

Hugh went to him; and, after a muttered colloquy, exclaimed:

"I'll soon put a stop to all this, now I'm here, I can tell you, I never heard of such a thing; to think, mother, of these villains having dared to beat poor Grimble's boy, John, nearly to death, because he attempted to stop them as they were taking game out of their foul traps."

Old Grimble, who appeared much affected, observed "that he hoped the young master would put a stop to such goings on," and then bowed and scraped himself out of the room again. Hugh was very excited and rather alarmed his mother, who did all she could to pacify him, and made him promise that he would not act rashly.

The next evening but one the ball was to take place, and

the house was turned completely topsy-turvy, what with the upholsterers and the carpenters there was nothing but hammer, hammer, hammer all day long, until I became at last fairly afflicted with the general excitement, and grew as anxious as any one for the eventful evening. I could not, however, get rid of a certain melancholy which appeared to haunt me and damp my pleasure considerably.

I remember with what scrupulous care I dressed myself for that ball, for I was very anxious to appear to the very best advantage to Miss Melton. Hugh was never much inclined to pay great attention to his toilette, and kept on calling out to me, to know if I were not ready. At last I put the finishing touch to my hair, and then, arm-in-arm with my friend, went down stairs. The rooms certainly looked most charming, and, as they opened into the conservatory, the flowers and decorations had a very pretty effect. A great many people were present, all friends of the Meltons, who had known and looked up to them for many years. I think many a young eligible girl came that night with the intention of making a conquest of Hugh's heart, for I suppose he was a great catch; he was rich, well born, and highly connected, and besides, was as handsome and amiable a man as one could possibly desire. Dancing was conducted with great spirit, and I managed to get some very pleasant partners, to whom Hugh had introduced me. Once only was I able to secure Mary Melton's hand, and that was for a valse in the early part of the evening; she was a most magnificent dancer, and I think we both acquitted ourselves very well. We did not talk much, as I felt very anxious and very much in love, and Miss Melton was bursting with laughter at the peculiar contortions an old gentleman, who would insist upon dancing, was going through with the doctor's daughter, who, though a very amiable girl, was no

beauty. Holding his partner at arm's length, as if she were some horrible decoction, the old beau, certainly not ungracefully, executed a series of manœuvres which would have made a French dancing master's hair stand on end.

About an hour after this, when the fun was at its height, a servant came in, and going up to Hugh whispered something into his ear. I saw him start, but he said nothing, he merely nodded, and the man left the room. When he had an opportunity, he came across to me and said:

"Old Grimble has sent up to say that the poachers are out to-night, so we must both contrive to get away and go with him. I'll go first, and then you come soon after; if we both go together mamma will be sure to notice it."

"All right," said I, and we separated. We both managed to slip out unobserved, and found Grimble and four other men, with sticks and lanterns, waiting for us at the back of the Hall. We quickly got ourselves ready, and started off. Grimble advised extreme caution, as he said the poachers were in the habit of leaving one of their number to watch and give the alarm, and that, unless we should be able to overpower this man quietly, there was not much chance of our getting far from the Hall without being observed.

We walked on for some time in deep silence, till one of Grimble's men made us a sign to stop, and then dashed into the bushes. After some little time he re-appeared, and told us he had seen the man on the watch, and that we must make a bold effort, and secure him. Hugh told me to keep close to the ditch, with another man, and walk on towards a clump of trees that stood out majestically in the darkness. He, himself, went with old Grimble in a direction quite at right angles to the way we were going, with the intention of attacking the poacher in the rear; while the two other men were sent down towards the river to cut off

any chance of escape by that means. I, and the man with me, kept on our way but slowly, as the ditch was very rudely constructed, and here and there quite choked with brambles and briars. Just as we were nearly up to the clump of trees, I fancied I saw something moving about, but my companion said it was nothing; however, thinking it best to be very careful, we stopped to give the others time to come up, as they had farther to go than we had. Again, I felt sure that I saw something among the trees, and my companion this time agreed with me, so we crept quietly on and entered the clump. Then I distinctly perceived a man walking up and down, with his head erect, as if he were straining every nerve to notice any one who might be coming. Presently, he stopped in his walk, and for the first time noticed us. Then, with an oath, he sprang upon me; and, before I was aware of it, had knocked me down senseless. I remember no more, but was aroused by a rough shaking, and hearing Hugh's voice exclaim, "Good God! Charlie, you are not much hurt I hope. I don't think the villain will do much more harm; now, get up, and let us see what is to be done."

I got up slowly, and by the light of the moon, which had now risen, I perceived that the poacher was gagged and strongly bound; and that he had a deep cut over the right eye, from which the blood flowed freely.

I must own that I felt rather faint at all this, but summoning up all my courage, I prepared to follow Hugh, who seemed very anxious to be moving. We now entered a turnip field, at the end of which lay the river, in all the glorious beauty of a winter's night; the moon, as it lit up the ripples, and threw large masses of trees into bold relief, seemed to smile sadly upon us. We walked along the banks in single file, moving with the greatest caution, as we might

expect to come up with the main body of the poachers every instant. I could perceive that Hugh's blood was up, and that he was greatly excited; and again I felt that strange foreboding of coming evil, when I looked at his flushed and determined countenance.

Just as we were about to pass through a barred gate we came upon the men we were in search of. They were busily engaged in removing game from their nets and snares, and at first did not perceive us. Hugh went straight up to the nearest, and exclaimed, in his rich clear voice:

"You confounded rascal, how dare you do this?"

The fellow, though startled, turned at once, and, seeing Grimble, shouted out, "The keepers! the keepers! Now, make a stand my men, and don't let the varmints get one of us this time."

Irritated at this, Hugh advanced towards the man, and immediately closed with him; the contest was but short, for Hugh was both powerful and active, and soon had overpowered his antagonist. He then came to my assistance, as I was closely engaged with a thickset burly fellow who wielded his arms as if he had been a blacksmith, and not being a mighty man of valour, I was very glad of Hugh's assistance, for certain unpleasant sensations on the head and face began to tell me that I was getting rather the worst of it. The poacher seeing Hugh come up, pulled out a pistol from his coat pocket, and pointing it at him, exclaimed:

"Now, my fine fellow, move but a step further, and I'll shoot you as dead as a herring."

Hugh at first stared at him in astonishment, then, with the cry of a wounded lion, rushed at him! I saw a flash, then heard the report, and when the smoke cleared away, I saw my Hugh, my dear, dear Hugh, lying on the ground

bathed in blood. I heard the fight still waging between the others in the distance, and I saw Hugh's antagonist making for the river at the top of his speed.

Oh! the unutterable agony of that moment. Was he badly hurt? I dared not think, I knelt down by his side, I took his hand, and called him; he opened his eyes slowly, and putting his hand to his head, said very sadly: "Oh, mother, mother!" then smiled at me and fainted. I was distracted, and shouted for the others till I was hoarse. Presently they came up, and old Grimble, who could scarcely walk, from a gunshot wound in the leg, on seeing Hugh on the ground, said solemnly: "May God forgive 'em for this night's work. I can't!"

We gently lifted Hugh up, and bore him along. As we neared the Hall we could hear the sounds of merriment proceeding from the ball-room, and I almost cursed them. Several couples were walking about in the corridor as we entered, among them Hugh's sister, who, hearing the slow tramp of the men, came to see what it meant, and met us face to face; then, noticing our burden, she rushed towards it; and, with a shriek so loud and piercing that it rang through the Hall, fell senseless.

This roused the house, and we were soon surrounded by an eager, sorrowing, heart-broken group. I had wanted to break the matter gently to his mother, but, before I could seek her, she came out of the ball-room; and, as if at once divining the whole affair, with a self-possession that fairly startled me, thanked us, and requested us to carry Hugh to his room.

The doctor, after a careful examination of the wound, pronounced the case hopeless!

I was so overpowered, that I remember but dimly all that followed. I know I went to Hugh and kissed him, then

left him with his mother; what passed between them I never knew; but when it was all over, she came out, and though still perfectly calm, I saw from her face that this last blow had stricken the poor widow to the dust. She appeared to move mechanically, as if laden with a grief too great for mere tears, this earth were no longer, and there were no other to look for.

They buried him in the village church-yard, in a pretty nook, overshadowed by a proud lofty oak, that seemed the very emblem of his nature.

When I bade farewell to his mother, she looked long and earnestly at me, and said, wearily:

"He was kind to my Hugh!"

Yet, she neither wept nor moved a muscle of her face, but preserved the same agonising composure.

It is now some fifteen years since all this happened. Mary Melton is in India with her husband, an officer in the Lancers, and has a son who is said to be somewhat like the Hugh of old—for he has the same large eyes, the same curly hair.

Mrs. Melton soon followed her son to the grave, and when she was buried they buried old Grimble also, another actor in that awful tragedy.

For myself, I was successful at College, and I have succeeded at the bar. I am, I suppose, a confirmed old bachelor.

Sadly musing, as I look into the bright coals before me, I seem to feel Hugh near, and to hear his bright and cheery voice once more, I seem to see him as he sat with me at College, talking over his beloved home—I see it all again.

Once a-year, on the 21st of December, I go down to the old churchyard at Melton, and lay three flowers on three graves—one on Hugh's, one on his mother's, and one on old Grimble's.

THE TEAR.

EARS ago, I stood, one hot sultry evening in August, on London Bridge, leaning over the parapet, and looking straight up the river, along the vista of lights, till the last row was lost in the distance. I looked and looked, but saw nothing. I heard the tread of many feet behind me; I knew that the hum of human voices swam in the air around me; I instinctively perceived the splash of the waters:—my outward senses saw, heard, and felt, but carried nothing to my inward vision. It grew darker and darker and darker, I stood and stood and stood, till the perception of sense left me, and I felt I was drowning—and was I not drowning in the waters of social life, with no helping hand near to rescue me from their depths?—It came upon me that drowning people see rapidly the principal occurrences of their life pass before them, and as I went down and down and down, gasping for breath, there came my life before me, as the last remembrance of this world. I saw a country vicarage and two little children in pinafores, playing in the pleasant garden around it, and heard a gentle voice call "Herbert, Herbert"—I saw a coach stop at the

gate of that garden, and myself, a lad of about seven years, kiss father, mother, and sister at parting, and then hoisted up to be taken to the grammar school in the next town—I saw, a few years later, a lady, my mother, in deep mourning, and myself by her side on a fresh-made grave, my father's—I saw myself again, with a letter of recommendation in my hand, standing at the banker's door in the next town—I saw, years after, Mary, the banker's ward, and myself, walking under the chesnut-trees, and heard from her sweet lips the avowal that she loved me—I saw myself standing in her brother's counting-house in London, to become, after a year's probation, a junior partner in his firm—I saw myself in noisy company, whirling away to Epsom races on the Derby Day—I saw myself, with my head resting on my arm in utter despair, in the lonely counting-house—I saw a stranger enter and pay me money on account of the firm—my breathing became heavier and heavier—I saw myself receive that money, hurry out and pay a sheriff's officer—I saw, on my return, the suspicious glances of the old confidential clerk—and I saw myself leave the office, broken in spirit, for nothing could make good the breach of trust, and hurry to London Bridge, to plunge into the waters, as many others had done—I saw nothing more, the cold perspiration of death stood on my forehead, my throat was choked up, my head swimming, my clammy hands were clinging to the parapet as my body was just going over,—when, yes, I saw something—Mary's face—and *one* hot burning tear fell from my half-sightless eyes on my hand. That tear brought me back to consciousness. I swung my body back, and was saved.—

I looked at my hand, there it stood, that big tear. I could not say what it then brought home to my mind, perhaps nothing definite ; it had only re-established some sympathetic channel between my inner and outer self,

between myself and the world. I looked again down on this tear, none followed, and on the burning spot where it rested. It burnt my hand as repentence burneth the soul, and, all at once, a feeling of repentance pervaded my whole being; close on it followed a desire to redeem myself, if possible, and that desire pointed next to the irresistible impulse, to "Own all, whatever happens."

I never questioned or parleyed with myself, I rose and resolutely turned homewards, then I perceived that a policeman had been watching me. I took no notice of him, and with steady, though speedy step, retraced my way over the bridge. On, on I went, I do no think my brain could have harboured two ideas at the time, only the one—get home—pressed me forward. I am sure I saw nobody of all the persons I passed, and my ear heard only mechanically the clock strike twelve—three hours had I stood then on that bridge—I opened the door of the house where I lived, in one of the streets leading to Russell Square, lit my candle, and went to bed. I did not sit up and think or consider, my brain would not have done it at the time, I actually went to sleep at once, and woke the next morning just in the same state, where I had left off in the night, one impulse having taken firm hold of me. I dressed and breakfasted as usual, and went out. I do not think I could have told the time, but I know that I went straight towards the City, our counting-house being in a retired corner, and not far from King William Street.

People hurried by me, but I went on steadily, perhaps I walked on slower as I was drawing near the counting-house. I knew something had to be done, and that I meant to do it. I entered the counting-house, and felt the glance of the old clerk resting on me, it did not stop me, I could, however, not have bid him the usual "good morning," or even asked

if Mary's brother was already in.—I passed rapidly through, and entered our private room, and stood before *him*, whose cold upright nature I knew would judge me and my sin at the harshest. He looked up and I sat down, hastening inwardly forward to my confession and the death-blow to all my future hopes:

"Mr. George," as I called him, "have the kindness to listen to me for a few minutes. I yesterday received from an old customer of yours, Mr. Hansell, of Stourbridge, the sum of £1,200, which he wished to pay in before the time, as he was accidentally in town; when he found you were out, he left it with me, taking no memorandum, and desiring me to remit the receipt at any convenient time. I took the money, I did not hand it to the cashier, but, Mr. George, I went outside and paid it to a sheriff's officer, who was waiting for me round the corner. I therefore broke the trust reposed in me and can never become your partner or Mary's husband. I know that; so be good enough not to tell me of it, but say what you will do with me, as I cannot pay you back for two years."

I stopped. I had began to tremble when Mary's name rested on my lips, and when the effort was completed, hid my head on my arm in very shame. I could not have met the glance of that man. I waited, he did not speak; I waited still, and felt he was looking at me. He coughed, I knew the sentence must come now, and that it would be crushing, since I knew the man I had to deal with. For an instant I wished those waters had closed over me the night before, as he began: "Mr. Herbert Elliot,"—what he would have said, I know not, for at that moment the rustle of a silk dress was heard, and in the utter despondency of my whole being I felt an arm round me, and such an heavenly voice say near me, "George, stop, say no more; I know all.

It was I who recommended him to you, and sent him, ambitious as I was, to town, to become your partner in time. Inexperienced and impulsive as he was, I now know I sent him into the very jaws of death, and to the worst guide I could have done. I ought to have known that you, George, can only judge, not guide. I know his career has ended with you ; but I heard his confession, and the fact that he had the power to make it, gives me hope for his ultimate mental recovery from sin. I do not know what I should have done, if he had not made the confession, but as he has, if he will but trust me, his best friend on earth, I will again ask my guardian to let him enter the banking-house in our quiet country town. Here is the money, George ; say not a word !" And she hurriedly wrote a cheque on herself for the amount, payable at her guardian's bank. "Do not speak, George, this moment is beyond it. Come, Herbert, look up ; I arrived last night at nearly midnight, you did not know I was in town. Come at once, you cannot shake hands now. Do nothing, say nothing, but come with me, and when you are again at home and alone,—pray !"

George Allerton possessed decision and Mary Allerton too; she conquered. She took my hand, raised up my head ; we left the room, the counting-house, entered the carriage that was waiting outside, and drove away. Mary directed the driver to her brother's house in Eccleston Square. We spoke not a word on the road. I merely grasped her hand and held it tightly ; she never drew it away, but I did not see her face, whatever emotion worked there was hidden from me. At her brother's house she descended, and fetched some articles she had left, asking me to lean back and remain quiet. I did so ; she almost immediately returned, and told the man to drive to the Paddington Station, and

stop at the Great Western Hotel. When we arrived there, she asked for a private sitting-room, and ushered me in. Having dismissed the carriage, and ordered the little luggage she had to be brought to her, she took both my hands, and said: "My dear, dear Herbert, here no one knows us. Now go back to your own lodgings, settle all your affairs, pack up all your things, pay everybody you owe anything to, and if you cannot do everything before nightfall, leave instructions with some responsible person, and be back here by six o'clock. We shall get home by the eleven o'clock express, and they will expect us. I knew you might want money and brought it. Here are bank notes, will they be sufficient?" She handed me several hundred pounds in notes, I returned them, keeping fifty, the sum I stood in need of. "So much I may want to pay off all personal bills," I said quietly. "And, as you wish, Mary, I shall be back here by six o'clock." There might have been a slight tremor in my voice, she noticed it, looked me straight in the face, and repeated: "Six o'clock, Herbert. Mind I trust you, alone, to do your business like a gentleman. Leave cards with people you wish to, others you can write to. You will return punctually?"

"Punctually, Mary," I said, "have no fear of me. I trust *you*, and shall come back."

I knew what was in her mind: she was afraid I should again give way to despair, and do—Heaven knows what.

That stage, however, was passed. I was certainly morally stunned as yet, but I was so far conscious of my position, that I would not willingly have lost the only anchor I could discern, the anchor of a pure woman's love.

My affairs were not complicated, perhaps less so, than you might have thought, for one who had incurred such heavy betting debts as £1200. By five o'clock all was ready; reserving it to myself to write to a few more intimate

acquaintances (a thing I was then incapable of) when I had reached home. I started for the Great Western, and found Mary looking out wistfully from her window; a gleam of relief evidently passed over her features, as she saw me drive up with bag and baggage. Soon all was settled, and we left London, and my trials behind us, by the six o'clock train. Good fortune had given us a carriage to ourselves; and the moment we were beyond the whirl of the big town, Mary turned to me, and said: "Herbert, dear, I want to say a very few words to you. Do listen to me, and be sure you can trust me. What I have done for you, and what I say to you, comes from a most sincere wish to further your welfare. We are neither of us able to say much to-night about this sad catastrophe; when we get home to Leighton, you will at once put up at my guardian's, he expects you, else the town *will* talk. Take no notice of anything to-night; you are tired, go straight to bed, and so shall I. To-morrow morning, see my guardian, and place in him what confidence you think proper. You know his heart is as pure gold, you can do as you like, and make your own arrangements with him; I shall not interfere. He will do what is best; he is fond of you, and loves *me* as a daughter. His son Edward is not a bad fellow; but, you know, some reserve must be had before him; I leave all to your own manliness. Now, I am just a little shaken, so we will have no further confidences to-night. Take my hand, Herbert, if you will, but let us be very quiet and sedate. To-morrow I shall expect you in the chesnut walk, and then we will clear up matters for better or worse? Yes, Herbert!" And she turned upon me her full, clear eyes. I just discerned one trembling tear as it escaped, and might have gone beyond my instructions to keep steady, had we not at that moment stopped at some small station, contrary to custom, and been incommoded by a fellow pas-

senger, a stout middle-aged gentleman, of much fuss and circumstance.

There was an end to all further conversation; our hearts were too full to speak lightly on every day matters, and the presence of a third person prevented our touching on that which occupied our thoughts so entirely. We arrived at Leighton, and found the banker and his household ready to receive us. On a word or two from Mary, he, however, greeted my coming as an every day matter, and made no objection to my retiring immediately. It is true, a load was off my mind; this evening, in the pleasant, cool bedroom at Leighton, and the last, on dusky London Bridge, were widely different. I felt I had been saved from the most cowardly of crimes, self-destruction; but I could not get rid of the feeling of pain—pain in my head, pain in my heart.

As yet, my mind was not quite clear. I still, now and then, felt drowning, and the support I held by was Mary, but the very pain I felt, arose from the circumstance that my condition barely enabled me to still the fearful throbbing at my heart.

I laid down, as I had done the night before, scarcely conscious of what I was doing, and, when I rose the next morning, was not refreshed by my dreamless sleep. I breakfasted alone, and then sent a message to Mary's guardian, to ask when I might see him. He returned the answer, any time I liked; immediately, if I chose. This visit was almost harder than that to Mr. George's counting-house the day before. As gleams of consciousness were returning, so I began to feel the wretchedness of my position, intensified a hundredfold with the friend of my late father, who had received me so generously into his own house, had made me one of his family, had consented to my wooing Mary, his ward, and had held out some prospect, that, if I

proved worthy, I might expect some day no mean pecuniary advantage from him, as he had but an only son. Why had I left the quiet country bank to become a great London merchant? So far my reflections went. I felt my head growing dizzy again. But it must be done, if I meant to make reparation, it must be begun at once.

Down I went into the banker's snug little room. I knew he would expect me there. He received me with outstretched hands, and said:

"Herbert, that worthy girl has already pleaded for you. I know something has gone very wrong, else she would not have started off in such haste to fetch you. How she heard of it, I do not know, but a true woman's heart, I think, feels evil coming. You want to come back here, and you shall, just the same. You know we are utterly independent of any one—kings in our own realm here. I even need make no communication to my son, as he will not enter into partnership for two years. What reason you chose to give him for returning, is your matter, not mine. Herbert, I see, by the nervous twitching of your face, that you feel the shame of your position, so do not lower yourself more to me. We all want every grain of moral courage in our lives, use that to your utmost power, and become again worthy of her. Herbert, she is a treasure; do not disappoint her—that is all I have to say."

I do not think I could have spoken just then, on my wretched downward course, to that simple good man, and so shook both his hands in silence at first, gasping out at last the words:

"Dear Sir, another time I will tell you all. I cannot now."

"No, no," he replied; "I will not have you degrade yourself. I take you up where I left you. Tell Mary that will

be better. I shall hear from her, if there is any thing I ought to know. Tell her all! To-morrow morning come into the counting-house as usual, and meet my son there."

We parted; and I went to my room, chewing, chewing, chewing, the bitter cud of repentance and degradation.

I could not have busied myself to unpack my boxes, but opened the window looking over the garden and sat down by it. Hours passed, and lunch was brought to me; I still sat by that window. Dearly I loved a good cigar, but I could not have touched one now. Every enjoyment seemed foreign to me. It was getting late in the afternoon, and I began to feel weary of everything. I seemed as if I alone were in the world, and every other being had vanished—the veriest solitude oppressed me, when I saw the flutter of a white dress down in the garden, and remembered my rendezvous with Mary. Hard it had been to meet her brother, still harder to meet her guardian; but her I met with a hopeful pulse beating in my veins.

I rushed down, and suddenly approached her: "Mary, I want you, I want you all to myself for a whole hour. Oh, Mary, you must listen to me, or I shall die of this oppression."

This time *she* took my hand, and quietly led me to the chesnut-walk. She drew my arm through hers and gently went forward.

"Dear Herbert, what have you to say? My guardian knows the sum I have given you, and has already paid it, as my brother sent down the cheque at once, to prove its validity. It is a pity it is gone, as it was a fourth part of what I should have brought you. Still, it is but a small sum to have rescued you from shame. Don't offer it back as yet. I know how you stand at home, and I would not grieve your poor mother's heart, or lessen her and your sister's income;

for all I possess. Speak about what *I* have done no more. Now let us speak about yourself. But, Herbert, before you begin, I want to say something, which you must not misunderstand, and I want to say it first, that you may not think I am influenced by anything you may have to reveal. You know it is August now, and that your year of probation would have ended next January—we were to have been married in May following; now I want you to put that off for two years. Dear Herbert, do not misinterpret my meaning. I cannot explain all, you must feel for and with me; you are and always will be the same to me; but I want you yourself to recover this blow, and regain the moral consciousness of perfect rectitude; and I want others to be aware of it. The loving eyes of a woman see far, and you may understand me quite in two years."

There was a pause: Mary had nestled a little closer to me, as if she meant to show that no want of affection dictated that request, and gently pressed my hand as it lay in hers. It would be no use denying it; I did feel hurt, perhaps more so, because she told me honestly at once. I could then not comprehend that lofty character, which, despising all round-about ways, went straight to the end.

"Mary, dear," I said after a while, "my fate is in your hands; it shall be as you wish,"—something thick would come up in my throat—"but if you give me up, I shall be lost."

"You dull, suspicious Herbert," she answered angrily, "can you not see that it is from very excess of love I make the request. I won't have my hero thrown down from his pedestal, and I will not have others do it. Dear Herbert, now tell me how you came to such a sad pass; but don't say much, I have learnt something of London life, through

my poor wild brother, who now lies under a green mound in Kensall Green; and, I think, one ought never to expatiate much on one's mistakes or faults as it takes off the sharp edge of the wrong, and blunts our nice sense of honour: we become at last used to look at them as things in the natural course of our life, and this way of looking at his minor and then his graver sins, brought my brother to destruction."

I felt Mary was doing herself violence, even to mention her brother, and I knew she only did so to further my cure.

"Mary, dearest," I resumed, "I shall not have to lay much before you; and what I have, shall be done quickly. I went up to London in January; some time in February I made the acquaintance of a very smart young fellow, at your eldest brother's house; we became great friends and went about together. I don't know what he was, but I know he had handsome rooms and dressed in downright good style, and always could get introductions to good houses; he never mentioned his family, but his people could not have been vulgar. I was introduced to others, through him, and my life became wilder; all evenings were spent out, and I sometimes did not know how to write to you. Betting began on the Derby. and I was drawn in; at first moderately, but when I joined my party on Derby day, it appears, that excitement, wine, fast company, and such things, had so worked upon me, that I found next morning, on waking with a tremendous headache, I had risked by far more than I could possibly have met—and I had lost it. A certain time was given for settlement. I dare not speak to your brother—I could not write to you, though I tried. I was asked to give bills at a month, when I could not pay. I was sued on these bills, and as I declined to plead a betting debt, and as friend after friend, whose assistance I asked,

left me, I was at last reduced to the point of losing my liberty—when—you know it, Mary—how I paid that man. But you do not know what intervened between that afternoon and the next morning. The moment the act was committed, I felt that nothing could recall the breach of trust I had been guilty of. Your brother did, that evening, not return to the counting-house, but I felt that the vigilant eye of the old clerk was upon me. It was, however, not that; it was the inward voice that drove me away, haunted me as I passed through the streets, and at last made me rush, late in the evening, to London Bridge. There I leant over, thinking in the very bitterness of my heart, that it would be better to end at once, than tear every human tie asunder and become a felon. So confused did my senses at last become, that I believed I was already drowning; and saw, like a drowning man, the principal events of my life pass rapidly before me. As the last scenes began to crowd on me, my mind became so oppressed, that I was just going over into the waters, when, I remember well, I saw your face before me, Mary; and the sight of it brought back some sympathetic feeling, that called forth—a tear—one hot burning repentant tear—that saved me from suicide. Quickly I recovered, and perceived my way straight before me: to own at once to your brother what I had done, let the consequences be what they might. Like a half-drunken man I got home; like a half-drunken man I went to bed that night, rose the next morning, and rather staggered than walked to the counting-house, where I saw your brother, Mary, and was saved by you!"

"When you were leaning over the parapet of London Bridge, Herbert, I was rushing to my brother's house to find you; as I had heard from him that you had been very remiss in your duties, and he thought looked very wan and

in trouble. Perhaps my anxious face, as I looked at your portrait before going to rest, appeared to you then. I remember shedding some bitter tears over it that night."

After awhile, when we had walked quietly up and down, Mary resumed: "You have read some of Schiller's poetry, Herbert, do you remember the 'Ring of Polycrates?' The sage asks the ruler of Crete to throw something away as a peace offering to the Fates; he believes that their anger will be aroused at seeing Polycrates possessed of all earthly bliss, and that they will demand a heavy sacrifice. I do not say that we do just now possess all earthly bliss, but we have passed over a dreadful social abyss. I shudder when I think of it; and I think the Fates do demand some sacrifice, some restitution, to show that we do not despise them. Let that sacrifice come from ourselves, Herbert, and let the next two years be years of trial to us both; in which, sure of our mutual love, we dedicate ourselves to hard work, and make little outward show of our affection."

An icy chill passed over me. Had Mary's love received a shock, or not? I could not say; she was so gentle, so sensitive for me, that I paused before I could pronounce judgment. I should have liked to have taken her in my arms as formerly, but I could not; not one kiss had I dared to take from her lips, and now—I should not have thought of it.

We walked, again and again, up and down; without further conversation, till Mary reminded me it was the dinner hour, "Would I join them?" I declined; she did not press me, but prepared to leave me, saying:

"I must go in, Herbert, but you need not; do stay here in the cool shade, it will do you good. We shall never speak of this again, if you please, Herbert; such sad things should not be the topic of conversation." Then, brightening

up into her old self, she whispered earnestly into my ear: "Herbert, whatever you cannot understand in me now, you will later, do trust in me solely and entirely;" and, imprinting a kiss on my cheek, she fled away.

Old thoughts would come, and old thoughts did come: I could not banish them. Mary had said we should dedicate ourselves to hard work, meaning me, specially. It was some time since I had known hard work, in that whirl of London dissipation, but I would try—and try at once. I wavered no more, but went in, up into my room, and began to unpack my clothes, books, papers, pipes, &c. Their arrangement began to occupy my mind, I became interested, and after about half-an-hour I found myself actually smoking a cigar, and relishing it too. Orderly and perseveringly I settled everything, and then looked for the "Ring of Polycrates" in my copy of Schiller, repeating to myself the words:

> "Drum, willst du dich vor Leid bewahren,
> So flehe zu deu Unsichtbaren,
> Dass sie zum glück den Schmerz verleihn.
> Noch keinen sah ich fröhlich enden,
> Auf den mit immer vollen Händen
> Die götter ihre gaben streuen."

I went to bed early that night, without seeing any one, and just lifted one long, intense thought, upward!

I entered the counting-house the next morning, as usual, and was received by the banker with quiet dignity; I thought I saw a shade of sadness on his face; he turned to his son, saying:

"Edward, I told you, yesterday, that Herbert had returned, as the London business did not suit him: he will, therefore, resume his former duties."

Edward answered: "Very well, father;" and came up to me a little stiffly, to shake hands.

"Hope you will like the old business better, Herbert. Happy to see you." That was all I heard from those thin lips; but I remembered the Ring of Polycrates and the sacrifice, and knew I had to submit and redeem myself.

From that moment I never slackened. I learned the ballad by heart, and when I felt a little wearied, or falling back into old thoughts, or annoyed at Edward's coldness, I repeated some lines to myself, and bravely went on. Mary, who lived with the banker as his own daughter, presided over the establishment, and was ever the same: gently providing for all my comforts, encouraging me in every pursuit that might improve my mind; eager to get new books and good society around us; ever on the alert to chase old recollections from my mind, and bring it back to its early health and vigour. But Mary was not tender, and not loving, and never was it possible to get one of those dear *tête-à-têtes* I had so much enjoyed. At last, something new began to come over me, some fresh feeling, something like ambition. Plans for improvements in the town and neighbourhood had been started: I began to take an interest in them; I worked at their realisation; I engaged the attention of the banker to further some, and fall in with others. New people came into our neighbourhood; I read much of the sound literature on political economy, and began to hear myself speak at the dinner table, in the drawing room, and at last at public meetings. The banker smiled when he heard me praised; his son looked up, doubtful still, and Mary remained quiet as a mouse. So we went on for two years. I now worked in downright earnest; made many valuable acquaintances among the gentry and nobility near our town, and was courted as a man likely to be influential at elections. I was often away from home after business hours, never before; as I had, on the con-

trary, induced the banker to extend his business relations, and had already been the means of netting a good profit. Selfish as all men are, I was carrying out my instructions to the very letter, and thriving on them, but forgetting my instructress. My intercourse with Mary had become so peculiar, so settled down, that it was more that of sister and brother. Formerly, I was a nice observer of her toilette; now, she might have worn anything, I should not have noticed it; formerly, I never met her without a bouquet or something to please her; now, I was far more anxious for the arrival of this or that pamphlet; formerly, I could not rest without knowing that some plan went on for her amusement; now, it was a constant anxiety to meet this or that person, and finish this or that *résumé*. But, all things come to an end, and revenge themselves, in natural cause and effect, and so did my selfishness.

The two years more passed. The bright August sun rested on our midland scenery, ripening the fruits around us into richest hues. I was busy from morning to night: Parliamentary men, returning from town, called upon us and always singled me out for a chat. I was in my very element, when my younger sister asked to come and spend a week with me, as my mother had such a cross old friend staying with her, who did not like this and did not like that, that she could stand it no longer. I requested Mary's permission, and at once received it; a few days later I fetched little Emily, as I and every one had called her, from the station. But little Emily had grown into as pretty a young lady as you might wish to see; shy, and arch, and *very* observant.

"You have grown into a great gentleman," she said. "Mamma tells me you are getting a small lion here; and how your whiskers have improved, and how stout you are getting. Dear me, Herbert, I am afraid of you."

This she testified by giving me a private hug, behind the porter's back, and pinching my arm. "Herbert, how is Mary? You never speak of her now in your letters. Are you not friends?"

"Friends!" I exclaimed, alarmed; "Friends, for ever, and indissoluble."

"It must be a cool friendship, that," replied little Emily, and said no more.

But she had set me a thinking; that hug of hers sat me a thinking too. How long was it since the slightest endearment had passed between me and Mary? so long, I could not remember, we seemed always to have been like that. I do not know what made me do it, but I stopped at the nursery garden, and bought an exquisite bouquet. Emily looked at it, "Not for me, I know," she observed. I took my sister straight to the cool drawing room, where Mary I was sure could be found, and introduced the grown-up young lady; at the same time presenting her with my bouquet. Mary received my sister, with that sweet dignity, peculiar to her, but looked up at the bouquet, thinking at first my sister had brought it.

"How kind of you," she said, turning to Emily.

"No, no," Emily answered, "thank Herbert; it was from him."

"From you, Herbert?" Mary said, slightly raising her eyebrows, and a little disconcerted. "Thank you, it is very exquisite." And then placed it on the book she was reading.

You were, or any one was obliged to chat with Emily. Her vivacity was so communicative—all her remarks came out by halves, as her shyness had not quite worn off; but she was as fresh in mind and spirit as eighteen years ought to be, and evidently began to storm Mary's heart at once.

"You are reading German," Emily exclaimed, as she cast her eye on Mary's book, "and Schiller—are his ballads not delightful?" I have learnt half-a-dozen by heart. Do let me look: the 'Ring of Polycrates.' I know that too, it is rather too serious for me. Do you like it so much?"

Mary had reddened, a very scarce occurrence with her, and looked a little confused. "Yes, I like it, there is a great hidden truth in it."

I sought Mary's eye, but could not catch it; there was something in her manner I could not understand. The banker's entrance relieved something painful in our position, and left no doubt on my mind that my sister was welcome. Other visitors came, and after a while my sister accompanied me to my room; the moment she had entered it, she sat down in the great arm chair.

"Herbert," she said, looking me straight in the face, "what is the matter? Mary looks ill and unhappy, very—forlorn or hopeless, or like that—I cannot express it. It makes me shiver. I thought you were to be married long ago, and so did mamma, but she would not ask: Tell me, is it broken off?"

I could not have answered at that moment. An entire revolution was going on within me: something was very wrong—had I then carried my instructions too far, and been ungrateful?

I rushed up to my sister, kissed her, and said: "No, no, Emily. I don't know what you mean; perhaps it is my fault. Thank you, that you told me. Let me go now, I want to be alone for a little while." But my sister was persistent in the true feminine style: "Look, brother dear, you must not anger that girl, she is an angel!" And two bright tears glistened in little Emily's eyes.

I fairly ran away, down into the garden, and up into the

chesnut walk; but now would it be possible to cram into a few lines the thousand thoughts that crowded upon me. "You will understand me in two years," had Mary said on that dreadful day; and I began to understand her? She had wished to cure me quite and she had done it; the remembrance of that misery had been wiped away, by exertion, an active life, and better aspirations. I had become a man to be depended upon, and might one day be able to play my part; but, in my rashness, I had neglected that tender tie that had united me to God and man, when I needed it most and had well-nigh crushed it. Two months ago I had, through my share of certain speculations been able to hand the banker back £1200; it had not even been mentioned between me and Mary. It was true—this was the thirteenth of August—the anniversary of that day. She knew it, and had read the "Ring of Polycrates." "Mary, Mary, can you forgive me?" I called out in despair, not thinking any one was near. But a sweet voice answered: "Did you call, Herbert, did you want me?" It was Mary, sitting under an old tree, hidden from my view.

"Mary, Mary, my beloved, my darling, are the two years of probation over? Do you love me still?" I said to her with feverish anxiety, taking both her hands in mine. She had risen, and with one wild cry, and one great sob, she sprang into my arms, nestling her head on my shoulder. Oh, the great love of a good woman! We could not speak; for two years had she watched me, watched me tenderly, and my carelessness had made me not see that she had restrained her own feelings, in order to assist me to become a new man. At last, she had begun to think that ambition had replaced love, and that I had forgotten the sacrifice.

No caress was spared to call Mary back to bloom and

happiness, and what with one joy and another my head was almost turned; I could scarcely bear to see her out of my sight, and smilingly she would say: "Impulsive still, I shall have to lead you yet, but this time in gentler chains." Emily tossed her pretty curls just a little, evidently fast twining chains of her own round Mr. Edward, that would some day prove binding to both.

On the 12th of September, Edward and myself became junior partners in the bank: I celebrated my wedding-day, and my bride was given away by her guardian. Mr. George came down from London as a peace-offering. Mary gave me a new copy of Schiller's poems as a bridal gift, and on it fell one great tear, as she showed me the "Ring of Polycrates."

LA BELLE POLONAISE.

IN Warsaw, that capital of the departed, are many grand empty palaces, whose ancient names lead him, who is in any way acquainted with Polish history, back for centuries: bringing before his imagination the ever-varying rise and fall of historical development.

In the lifetime of the late Emperor of Russia there stood in Warsaw a square building, not very dignified in appearance, and called the "House Konsky." It was but half a palace, but what it lost by comparison with others in grandeur, it made up by old age. Here the cobwebs reigned supreme, and the big spiders sat in their "parlour" undisturbed, though they might seldom catch a fat fly. But the "House Konsky" *was* inhabited, and by three very strange persons. A little boy of eleven years, Vladimir Konsky; a little girl of the same age, Marie Leckzinski, and an old man servant, of unfathomable age. If you entered the "House Konsky," at mid-day, or early in the evening, and followed the old servitor through the dusty entrance hall into the right wing, inwardly regretting the departed magnificence that seemed once to have existed

here, you found suddenly yourself standing before a strange spectacle. The old man would announce you as Mr. or Madam So-and-So, and beg Her Royal Highness to allow you to be introduced to her. There was Marie Leckzinski, robed in a black velvet dress, ever so much too long for her, sitting on a kind of red daïs, and before her, handing papers to her with most solemn mien, and otherwise disporting himself like an attendant on royalty, her cousin Vladimir Konsky. The servant had announced your name, the royal Marie nodded graciously to you, and you had leisure to look round; there was positively nothing else in the room but a few wooden stools and an old table. The cobwebs seemed to have no respect for royalty, for they had not vanished before it; but the thing that attracted you most was an immense map on the wall, representing the dimensions of the ancient kingdom of Poland, and having a black crape curtain to cover it, that was just now drawn aside. The map had evidently not been made by skilful hands, still the landmarks of neighbouring states had been given correctly enough. It would have made the three great powers, Russia, Austria, and Prussia, shudder, had they seen what nice slices of their dominions the royal Marie and her cousin Vladimir, the concoctors of this voracious map, had appropriated to themselves for the kingdom of Poland. The royal Marie, when she became aware of your astonishment at the map, would descend from her throne, and pointing to Poland, say solemnly: "That is what we have lost, we poor Poles." Then she addressed you, if she saw you were strangers, to know where you came from; if you chanced to be English, Marie forgot her dignity, and embraced you with glistening eyes,—"Ah, you came from the refuge of the persecuted;" if you were French, she shook you by the hand, adding, "Ah, but one cannot always trust you;" if you were Ger-

man, she looked up anxiously into your face, and whispered, "Not Prussian or Austrian?" But immediately turned to another subject, as if, after all, no animosity could disturb *her*.

Then, your audience being supposed to be over, she re-ascended her daïs, and called Vladimir Konsky to hand her those dispatches from the Elector of Brandenburg and reigning Duke of Prussia; to lay before her those letters from her Imperial ally the Emperor of Germany; to read those messages from her friend the King of Sweden, making you fancy you were being carried back centuries; and, verily, together with the old dusty place and the strangeness of its inhabitants, you, at last, began to think you had been transported to some weird royal palace in times gone bye. No further notice was taken of you, and you did not seem in the least to disturb the intercourse between Her Royal Highness and her supposed chamberlain. The old servant appeared again, beckoned to you mysteriously, and conducted you from the room and the house. But few in Warsaw knew of these children living under the old man's care in the "House Konsky." It was supposed to be uninhabited; the few who were aware that it was not so, were of the true Polish stamp, and would have sacrificed their lives to protect the children, the last branches of two great Polish families. Only strangers that could be thoroughly trusted were sent to see them: even Russian spies had not penetrated here.

Marie Leckzinski's father and mother had died in exile, and charged the old servant to take their little daughter to Count Konsky's, the mother's brother. Marie for two years had led a wild life in a Polish castle, with her uncle and only cousin Vladimir, till a revolution entangled the Count in its meshes, and he fell, in some skirmish, for his

country. The Russian crown confiscated the remaining property of the Konskys, as it had confiscated that of the Leckzinskis, and the two poor children were taken by their faithful protector, as a last place of refuge, to the old house in Warsaw. Here Marie Leckzinski, deeming herself descended from the old royal branch of the kings of Poland, and having never forgotten the earnest conversations about Poland's glory and greatness, which she had listened to, when a mere child, during her parents' exile, so impressed her cousin Vladimir with her enthusiasm, that he willingly shared in her imaginative representations of royal state, and executed with her, and the assistance of old Stanislaus, that most remarkable map of the former kingdom of Poland. To show its departed glory, a black crape curtain was provided for it.

Vladimir was altogether an instrument in Marie's hands; whose young soul, but half understanding the patriotic sentiments at whose shrine it sacrificed, bent enthusiastically his more pliant will to her own ideas.

Three years these children lived in this way, apart from the world; just barely maintained by the assistance old Stanislaus could get for them. Instructing each other in the morning, they regularly held court in the afternoon, letting loose their imagination in all possible ways, and handling mighty matters of state as something appertaining to them. No play, no gambols, no childish laughter ever entered into their occupations: with the most precise sedateness they went through their daily representation. After three years' hidden life in the "House Konsky," old Stanislaus died, and Marie and Vladimir were thrown on their own resources. There was an end to their royal state; that they could perceive, as Stanislaus had never allowed them to go beyond the house, and there was no one to go out and provide for

them. The first thing they thought of was their map of Poland, which they carefully rolled up and hid away; the next thing was to send Vladimir to the priest and beg of him to come and see to Stanislaus' burial. They wept few tears over the faithful old man, their young hearts had already become inured to suffering; they thought themselves the greatest losers, as death had come so often, it would scarcely have frightened them much.

The priest came; found an aunt of Marie's, an abbess, who undertook her education, and sent Vladimir into a military school, as the best means to accustom him to Russian rule. The good priest was well aware that young Konsky, utterly without friends, and the son of a noble who had fallen at the head of a revolutionary band, must make early submission to that sway which had subdued his country. Not even the priest knew where the two had hidden their map; it was so precious a relic of their childhood to both Marie and Vladimir, that they would have entrusted the secret to no one.

In the old convent of St. Ursula, did Marie Leckzinski spend the next three years of her life. Fortunately for her the abbess, her great-aunt, was not an ascetic, but a lady of cultivated mind, who had taken refuge from family sorrows in these ancient walls. She had not the slightest intention to make Marie a nun, preferring to educate her like the other noble young ladies under her care. Marie herself inclined, however, rather to a severe style of study, as those early solemn impressions she had received in the days of her parents' exile could never be eradicated. Marie carefully hid from her aunt's knowledge the peculiar use she had made of her jumbled knowledge of Polish history; drove away all such thoughts for a time and joined the occupations of her companions. Once a year young Konsky was allowed

to see her in the presence of the abbess, and each year strengthened Vladimir's belief, that such beauty as Marie's had surely never existed on earth before. In former times he would not have noticed it, had she been ugly, so imbued was he then with the idea of her greatness, but his eyes now became opened to that loveliness, which Polish women of high degree often possess in no common measure. When he paid his third visit to his cousin, Marie shone upon him, like something superhuman, and Vladimir Konsky swore a great Polish oath, that no one but he should ever become Marie Leckzinski's lover. Over Marie intense love or affection seemed to have no power; she was pleased to see Vladimir, expressing no deeper feeling, and evidently imagining that they naturally belonged to each other for some purpose, connected with that remarkable map, hidden away in the cellar of the "House Konsky," *till the right time should come.*

In the beginning of the fourth year of Marie's stay in St. Ursula, the abbess died. On her death-bed she handed to Marie a letter to a friend in Berlin, who was herself childless and had promised to adopt Marie whenever the abbess should feel her end approaching. The abbess wept when she gave the letter to her niece, not so Marie; but she kissed those trembling hands tenderly and reverently, looking at her aunt, without fear of death. A few days later, she stood by the coffin, dressed in deep mourning: she stood as still as if she were lifeless herself! Long, long did she regard that face, looking herself the very embodiment of the mournful and tragical end of her country. It was impossible to send for Vladimir before her departure, so she wrote him a short note: "You will have heard, dear Vladimir, that the abbess is dead; I go to Berlin to be adopted by the Countess Thiele. Remember, we shall see each other again." It was

short, this note, and when Vladimir got it, he was furious. He stamped about in his room, and threw himself on his bed in despair It was of no use; Marie was gone, and the muster-roll called him back to plain sense and duty. Ah, the schemes he then propounded! They were of most improbable dimensions, all too grand for him to carry out; the excess of his fury gone, the impracticability of the schemes showed itself, and Vladimir—began to brood. Marie, on the contrary, quietly went to Berlin, carrying with her there, as everywhere, an unbounded devotion to her country.

Countess Thiele was a peculiar old lady, very proud and very haughty, possessing no end of ancestors; and, like a real Prussian dame of high descent, precise about her dress, the etiquette of her household, and her style of living. Marie Leckzinski pleased her extremely; when the tall slim figure of the noble girl stood before her, the Countess nodded magnificently: "I see, we shall understand each other," she added, "we have the same temperament. You are welcome, Marie Leckzinski; I hope you will never forget the dignity of your name and that of the family you now enter." The Countess imprinted a faint kiss on the cheek of her protégée, who curtsied low, as the best way to return the compliment.

Within an hour, both ladies sat at the table, as if they had known each other for years. The Countess descanted on her ancestors, Marie's introduction at court, and the necessary preparations for her dress, and Marie drank in every word. There would be something new in seeing the descendants of the man who had helped to divide her country, something instructive in watching this great people that was nothing, when she had been powerful. Marie had so far identified herself with the fate of her country, that she imagined she represented it in her own proper person. Countess Thiele

had excellent taste in dress, so had Marie, and a month after her arrival, on the evening of her court presentation, the young Polish Countess appeared before her protectress, as a worthy representative of the nation to which so many great-hearted and beautiful women had belonged. The old dame, in stiff pearl-grey silk, glistening with diamonds, set off the lovely girl, dressed in that most graceful material—white satin; and adorned with no other ornaments than two rows of large-sized pearls. Dress was singular in those days, and tasked female beauty much more severely than it is wont to now. Marie's very name had scarcely become known in those circles which are called good society, in any metropolis; the old countess said that one must not enter those precincts raw, but the more *distinguée* the new comer was, the more she should be *au fait* with the principal personages she would meet, and with the main principles that ruled those circles. It was, therefore, a fresh impression in every way, that Marie would make, and the Countess was no little proud of her adopted.

"*Que vous êtes belle?*" She continued: "I hope your beads will remain steady, and your heart unmoved, when those princes, dukes, and nobles, will praise your beauty in no measured terms."

There was something Marie was about to say, which she again suppressed, remembering that she was in a strange land; but the gratified look of the old lady touched her, and, with a smile, Marie gently took her hand and kissed it. To see two proud natures unbend towards each other, has a peculiar charm; and Countess Thiele had actually a glistening tear in her eye when she drew Marie's arm through her own, and said: "My daughter!"

It was not in the saloons of the great royal schloss that Marie was to be introduced, but in those of the more modest

royal palace, where Frederick William III., the father of the present and the last kings of Prussia resided, and held receptions in his latter years, assisted by the Crown-Princess Elizabeth. Countess Thiele and Marie entered. Much company had already arrived, and every eye was instantly directed to the new beauty. "Who is she?" was asked in ever such delicate whispers. Every one was aware that Countess Thiele would be rather *difficile* in her choice of a protégée, which did but enhance the importance of the introduction. The arrival of the King and royal family, however, hushed all questioning; and as those present ranged on each side, the monarch passed, kindly nodding, on to the upper end of the principal room. When Marie's turn came, the King said, in his good-natured brusque manner: "Peculiar name—ah!—I remember; handsome—very—Countess Thiele—must soon marry—good name too—sweet child;" and so passed on. The soft eyes of the Crown-Princess rested with strong interest on Marie. "Gräfinn," she said to Countess Thiele, "*Sie ist sehr schön*, rather a difficult task for you, I think." Elizabeth was evidently already aware under what circumstances Marie had become the adopted daughter of the Countess. "Good and noble," answered the latter, as both made room for others. The royal presentation over, conversation in that peculiar hushed manner, usual in such circles, became general, and Marie had to curtsey here, and smile there, accept fine compliments on one side and hear overdone phrases on the other; speaking all along in that lofty tone, as if she merely listened with gracious attention.

"*Elle est belle, mais elle est froide*," said one young exquisite, just back from Paris.

"*Qui donc?*" asked a younger scion of the royal house.

"*Qui?—'La Belle Polonaise!'*" And Marie was christened. That name clung to her wherever she went.

Much fuss was made. Carriages rolled up to the Countess's house in the Wilhelm's Strasse; cards innumerable were left; invitations poured in. Countess Thiele knew how to select and give every one his proper place. Certainly her powers were severely tried in chaperoning Marie; but nothing was left undone that ought to have been done, and all social duties were performed with exactitude. However weary Marie might be, however trivial she might think the occasion for appearing in demi-toilette or grande-toilette, she did that which the Countess thought necessary. She never slighted a wish of hers, or showed impatience at any plan drawn out for her; but, under all this, she lived a life of her own: watching, taking notes, eagerly hearing something new, conversing modestly, but earnestly, with men and women of sense, when she met them; turning to account every possible information she could obtain on the development of the Prussian state, and becoming day after day more thoughtful, as well as more free from prejudice and superficial impulse for her own adored country.

For one year the Countess and Marie lived thus harmoniously together. They had spent some months on the Silesian property of the Thieles, and Marie could not but compare the thriving condition of these peasants, and the thorough management of the Prussian landholders, with the degraded state of the Polish peasant, and the wild way in which many Polish nobles neglected the chances of improving their estates, merely drawing subsistence from them, and ever on the alert to throw up serious employment for the wildest hope of regaining liberty and old renown by some futile attempt to throw off the very galling yoke of the stranger.

"Vladimir is one of them," she would say to herself—"so was his father, so was mine. It will never be done that way."

Mary had engaged, as her own personal attendant, a little Polish girl, of about her own age; sharp, quick, and anxious

to please her mistress in all she had still to learn of the ways of a great lady. She was very faithful, this Polish Anna, but embarrassed Marie sometimes by the peculiar way in which she watched her, and seemed to read all her thoughts. It often appeared to Marie as if some hidden motive power actuated her maid in her devoted attendance and peculiar watchfulness.

Anna had one day, in the early part of Marie's stay in Berlin, asked to see Contesse Marie Leckzinski, as she brought a letter from Warsaw for her. Marie had seen her, and found the letter was from the good priest, who had protected her in former times, and asked her, as a favour, to take the bearer, Anna Zwitykow, into her service. She was an orphan; he had known her parents, and would be glad to see Anna in the hands of a kind mistress. Marie engaged her, with the consent of Countess Thiele, and, though Anna could never quite lay aside her girlish ideas and character, she tried as much as possible to adapt herself to fine Berlin ways, to please her mistress.

It had certainly been mentioned in high circles that Marie Leckzinski was to be the heiress of Countess Thiele, as the distant relations of the Countess were themselves wealthy, and required no support from her: still Marie had no particular lovers. Beauty and money are almost strong enough to entice any man, but whether Marie kept them all at that distance, beyond which there was no advance, or whether she told not of her conquests, she remained free—ever the graceful dignified '*Belle Polonaise.*'

Berlin was full; Berlin was noisy; Berlin was coming home from the country. The King had just returned from the baths of Töplitz, in Bohemia, and expected a short visit from the Emperor Nicolas of Russia and the Empress, his own daughter. There was to be one ball and one reception, before the imperial

visitors returned on their way home. Countess Thiele had been an especial favourite of the Empress of Russia in her young days, and though she naturally now saw but little of Her Majesty when she passed through Berlin, yet the Empress never came or went without sending for her old confidante.

Their Majesties had arrived, and on the second day the reception was to take place. There were always old faces to be greeted, and old friends to be seen, and the Empress had a good memory. Besides, royal and imperial folks have hearts, whatever may be said to the contrary.

Countess Thiele had never been made aware by look or word of Marie's strong devotion as a patriot, and of her consequent abhorrence of all things Russian, and naturally was but too proud to introduce her young charge to the Empress; she was, however, scarcely prepared for the deep impression Marie made on Her Majesty.

"*Mais elle est belle, mais elle est belle,*" the Empress repeated several times, and could not sufficiently admire the self-sustained dignity in one so young. The day after the reception, the old Countess had her own private quarter of an hour with Her Majesty, of which little favour she was very proud. But from this short visit she returned quite excited, calling for Marie all over the house; a most undignified proceeding.

"Quick, quick, *ma chere*, I have great news. Marie, *que pensez vous?*"

Marie looked at the old Countess in surprise. Surely she had never seen her so moved.

"*Eh bien, que pensez vous*, the Empress has asked you to accompany her to St. Petersburgh as maid of honour!"

"Me, Marie Leckzinski, whose parents—," but Marie stopped short, for the first time since her parents' death

Marie was not herself. "You did not consent to it, I hope?" she hastily asked.

"Marie Leckzinski, *ma chere* Marie, there is no consenting in the matter—you are a Russian subject, *ma chere*, and Her Majesty can command."

All the Polish blood in Marie's veins rose in rebellion; and she had to lay her hand on her heart to still its beating. As she did so she seemed to press something that lay there, and Marie was changed. She collected herself, she drew a deep breath, she walked up to the old Countess, and taking her hand said: "If I must go, I must. I am only sorry to lose your society!"

"My dear Marie, I love you and I would have loved no daughter better. You go from me to her whom I adore as the best of women. You will still remain a daughter to me, and take her rights, if you understand that. It is a high compliment to you and to me, for Her Majesty the Empress of Russia is the most fastidious lady in Europe for beauty and style. You need take little, as your whole wardrobe will have to be remodelled on a much more magnificent scale, and Her Majesty will herself see to that. But you must appear at the ball to-night, you must, and your appearance must be *distinguée*." There are women ever choosing this and that, but never knowing how to select dress well; there are others who do so instinctively. Marie was one of these, within an hour (but a short time for such an occasion) the selection was made, and, under the plea of a little headache and fatigue, Marie withdrew to her own pleasant room, and to the company of her own thoughts. Stealthily Anna, her Polish maid, knocked, she was admitted, as Marie knew she would not be able to keep her away.

"Contesse Marie is going to the ball with the Russians to-night?" Anna asked gently, but a little pertly.

"Hush, Anna, do not speak disrespectfully of such personages. I am even going further, Anna; I am going to St. Petersburg as maid of honour to the Empress!"

Anna was as white as a sheet, but suddenly she smiled: "Contesse Marie is joking," she said, "it would be impossible."

"I never joke, Anna, besides all things are possible—when you are a Russian subject."

"But Contesse Marie is not a Russian subject, is not any subject—is of royal descent herself. Ah, ah! I am wrong, I suppose. I forgot we were all Russian slaves." And Anna burst into tears.

"Come here, Anna," Marie said to her maid, "and listen quietly, if you can. Marie Leckzinski is no slave, and never will be a slave; people are only slaves when they do not know how to direct their own will. Work we must most of us, in one way or other, obey something or somebody we must all; the rest is granted by fortune's favour, and if we disguise that, our own will can guide us right and make us independent within ourselves. I am afraid, little Anna, this philosophy will not suit you, and you would embroil me with the Russians, as you call them, so I had better leave you here with the Countess Thiele, who, I know, will keep you if I ask her, or, shall I send you home again? Bye-the-bye," Marie said, "I should be glad if you did go home, if you took a letter to some one for me. I wonder why Vladimir Konsky has never written; I had never thought of it before, that he took no notice of my letter!"

Anna had stifled her sobs all at once, and stood there, watchful and eager.

"Contesse Marie must never send me away, I will pour out my heart's blood for her; I will never, never, leave her."

"But I do not want your heart's blood," said Marie,

looking at the pleading face before her. "Listen, Anna, you know, what I say I mean. If you show me within these two days, before we go, that you can command yourself and that I may trust you, you shall go to St. Petersburg."

Anna shook herself, as if she meant to say, not a nice place to go to; but suddenly changed her manner and became quiet: "When will Contesse Marie want me, to-night?" she asked meekly.

"Come here at seven o'clock, Anna, I should like to rest now. My head is really heavy to-day."

Marie's appearance that evening was exquisite. The full white dress of gauze over which she wore a pale green silk, trimmed with pendant leaves only, enhanced the symmetry of her figure; and the coronet of green leaves in her hair spoke of inherent good taste. She had no ornaments, but Countess Thiele, when she had looked at her approvingly, pronounced this impossible.

"*Mais, ma chère,* this evening you must wear diamonds, and I have something for you to remember me, allow me," and the Countess tied round Marie's neck a delicate gold chain with a diamond cross of great value. Marie had been a little pale, but such tender attention flushed her cheeks, and the sparkle of the diamonds brightened the brightness of those earnest eyes.

The court had given but few invitations, and the company was restricted to especial favourites. Countess Thiele, on a sign from the Empress, led Marie up to her. Marie curtsied low, as it was impossible not to feel respect for her Majesty, and with a kindly motherly gesture the imperial hand was held to Marie to kiss, and her place assigned her behind the Empress's chair. All present acknowledged the charm of this scene; to see '*La Belle Polonaise*' in so high a position, next to the dignified consort of the great northern

autocrat. The old Countess revelled in bliss, and told half-a-dozen persons privately, that Marie had been chosen for her majesty's maid of honour, at which doubtful shrugs were made. Marie Leckzinski, at St. Petersburg, did seem an anomaly; it was not thought possible that her nature would be sufficiently pliant for such a post.

Where was Anna, when Marie returned home that evening? She, so attentive, ever ready to receive her mistress at the very street door. One of the other maids accompanied Marie to her room, and there was Anna asleep, having let the candle burn low, the traces of tears still on her cheeks, and her head lying on a freshly written letter. At the sound of voices she started up in great confusion, crumpled up the letter, put it into her pocket, and made a thousand excuses at her want of vigilance.

"You have been writing a letter, Anna, and pray, to whom? I never knew you corresponded with any one."

"Oh, Contesse Marie, I was only writing to the good priest to tell him that we were going to St. Petersburg, and that I hoped he would pray for us."

Marie scrutinized Anna, but met a most unflinching look in return, so that all further questioning was at an end.

"I really ought to let Vladimir Konsky know," thought Marie before she went to rest, "but, perhaps, I had better not write till we get to St. Petersburg; he might do something foolish, which he cannot do when I am there."

In Berlin, Marie had not felt so strongly the power that had crushed the individuality of her country; she was rather eager to learn why the Prussians should have advanced so much, and her own brave people be left so far behind. She left the Prussian capital with regret. In St. Petersburg she knew she must be prepared to remember not only the fate of her parents, but to see daily the signs of the despotic sway that had trodden her nationality under foot.

They had parted, Countess Thiele and Marie. Anna had been charged to watch her mistress unceasingly, and be faithful to her, a very unnecessary proceeding on the old countess's part, and Marie had been consigned to the guardianship of two ladies who attended on the Empress. One, a Russian of pure Russian blood; the other, a worthy German Baroness, who was the Empress's shadow, and had so far melted into the interests of her imperial mistress, that little of her own idiosyncracy was left except a very good heart.

The imperial family inhabited one of the minor palaces, as the new winter palace had not yet been completed; but there was nothing spared in the splendour that surrounded not only their majesties, but all those who were in immediate attendance. Marie was in great request, as the Empress liked her daughters to see the graceful dignity that accompanied every movement of her new maid of honour. She was extremely admired by all the courtly throng which filled the saloons on gala nights, but was not popular; she had not the vivacity of the coquettish Russian, nor the pliability of the German noble ladies, she remained '*La Belle Polonaise.*' Poor Anna was lost; had Marie not done so much herself, Anna never would have gone through her duties. She knew some German and some French, and so could make herself understood in the palace where both were spoken, but she absolutely shuddered at the Russian tongue. She seemed to get very uneasy and mysterious, and became thinner, and paler, every day. When she thought she was unobserved, she would clap her hands, and look up to heaven, exclaiming: "How will it all end! What can I do to prevent their meeting!"

Marie, greatly occupied with her own thoughts, did not notice sufficiently her maid's serious despondency, or if she did

she put it down to her dislike of everything Russian, till she found her one day in tears, murmuring to herself in Polish: "What has he done? What has he done? She must see him now."

Marie, who attacked every difficulty at once, said to her: "Anna, I notice it now, you look ill, you look disturbed, you are in trouble, have you a lover? Please tell me: I cannot bear it any longer, I must send you home."

"Oh, no, Contesse Marie, indeed you must not, I must remain with you. Suppose anything happened; suppose the Russians carried you away, as I have seen them do it in my own country. Oh, no, Contesse Marie, I beg of you!" Anna exclaimed, on her knees.

Marie did not like scenes, and told Anna to get up and tell her what had happened. Anna caught at an idea, and suddenly smiling and smirking, she went up to her mistress.

"Oh, yes, Contesse Marie, I was ashamed to own it, I have a lover, and, I hope, he may not come after me;" and she looked anxiously around, "that you might not see him."

There she stood, nervously twitching the corner of her white muslin apron, and with the oddest possible expression on her countenance; her terror and anxiety but half chased away, and overlaid by the pretended shy, mysterious love-making.

"Anna, you have learnt to tell stories. I am getting afraid of you;" said Marie, severely.

"For heaven's sake, do not, Contesse Marie, I am as innocent as a child, and have enough to bear."

"Ah, that is it," answered Marie, "I meant to know what you have to bear."

At this moment, to Anna's great relief, a note was brought to Marie from the German Baroness, requesting her to come that evening to her privately.

"More mysteries," Marie said; "I do not like it, I hope they will get tired of me. Some heavy load lies on me here. I can learn nothing here but the ways of despotic government, of overbearing power, of great military exactitude, and unbounded prodigality in luxurious living. The amiability of the Empress cannot reward me for this! Oh, if I could go about among these Russians, see them, hear them, travel in the country, and learn their strength. No, I am a caged bird. Marie Leckzinski, take care, either you will do something foolish and undignified, or run away."

When Marie's soliloquy had ended, she turned round, Anna was gone. She was not in attendance that day, so she sat down near the window, looking on the few snowflakes that began to flutter here and there, and comparing her own existence to their erratic course.

Marie's window looked out on the square within the palace. She saw the sentinel standing in the bleak air, moving a few steps backward and forward, as he felt the nipping cold benumb his figures. She began to take an interest in him; just as if she had not often seen sentinels walk up and down, and had scarcely ever noticed them. Her eyes would wander back to him, and her thoughts would hover about him, wondering whether he was a true Russian, or belonged to some other nationality. It was getting dusk, and the time drew near when she had to pay her visit to the Baroness. "I will try to pass him," she said to herself, "and see if he has a Russian face."

Anna came back at last, fresh and unruffled; all the signs of her excitement gone. Contesse Marie was wrapped in velvet and fur, and Anna, almost as warmly dressed as her mistress, followed dutifully behind her, to accompany her across the square to the rooms of the Baroness.

As Marie passed the sentinel she tried to see his face, but

could not, and yet she fancied she heard a deep sigh near her. When Anna went by the sentinel she raised her eyes to the sky, as if she meant to say, "Heaven be thanked."

"*Ma chère*, Marie," the Baroness said, "I have much to say to you. You know I promised Countess Thiele to take care of you, and I shall do so, at any risk. Will you kindly sit down here, *mon enfant*, and listen to me." She went to see that the double door was closely shut, and then sat down by Marie. "The Empress loves you, she esteems you; the Emperor has noticed you, and even spoken to you; but much as he admires beauty, he does not like your being here, I think. I have watched you sometimes, and I believe under that icy calm, there smoulders a great fire, for whom I do not know. Marie Leckzinsky, I do not wonder, if your heart clings to your country, but you must not show it here; and you have shown it, by signs that are, it is true, but slight. There may soon be troubles at hand. In Poland perfect peace will not yet reign for a long while; but the Emperor brooks no opposition. *I* know him. Listen, Marie, there is a party who hopes much from the present Crown-Prince of Prussia. He is thought to have liberal tendencies. He may be King any day, as his Majesty, the present King, cannot be expected to live much longer. Marie, do you understand me, I cannot—I must not say more." And the old Baroness took Marie's hand kindly. "When you find," she whispered to her, "that you cannot stand it here any longer, come to me, I will manage it for you. Come back to Berlin; this is no place for you."

Marie rose, gratefully pressed the hand of the Baroness, looked long into her face, and very pale, but very composed, she placed one hand on her heart and waving a farewell with the other, went slowly from the Baroness's room; along the corridor, where Anna was waiting, and back across the square to her own apartments.

Long and earnestly did Marie contemplate her position that evening, and, at last, she came to the determination to write to Countess Thiele at once; but not by post. She would give the letter to the old Baroness, whom she could trust.

A court-ball was announced for the next day. Marie Leckzinski was radiant. Never had she seemed more lovely. The scarlet flowers in her hair gave a glorious colour to her cheeks, and, as if determined to overcome all obstacles, Marie smiled, talked, danced, and was another being. Princes, dukes, and counts asked for her hand in the dance. The Emperor graciously conversed with her, and was astonished at her intelligence. The tender glances of the Empress followed her, and the old Baroness whispered to her: "*Ah, ce soir, vous êtes un ange!*" Some foreboding told Marie that it would be the last evening in such company. Oh, could she but be back with her protectress, or, better still, in the old dusky "House Konsky" with Vladimir.

What a time it was since she had thought of him,—how long was it since she had known anything about him? Where could he be? Was he an officer, in one of the regiments? Ah, she was tied till the death of Countess Thiele, and then —ah, then, Vladimir, the map ——

"You are pensive, Contesse Marie," said a near relation of the Empress, "such beauty should not be exclusive."

Another time Marie would have simply answered, and moved away; but now she smiled gaily, entered into conversation, spoke about Berlin, and altogether captivated the heart of the young prince.

"*Elle est charmante, votre majesté,*" he exclaimed, as he went up to the Empress.

"*N'est-ce-pas, et c'est moi qui l'a protégée; elle a l'air d'une reine, comme cette autre Marie.*"*

* Marie Leszinska, the wife of Louis XV

But it was all false; it was the despairing wail of the wounded hart that came from Marie's lips. Marie Leckzinski amiable in St. Petersburg; Marie Leckzinski courting the society of Russian and Prussian princes—it was false, and she knew it; but she made a final effort to escape from this thraldom. The hour for retiring had arrived. Marie's last admirer was most assiduous, and she most graceful in returning thanks for his politeness.

The ground had a spare cover of snow; the stars of the winter-sky shone brightly: it was beautiful to see the broad Neva, not yet frozen over, move slowly on its onward course, and to feel the solemn night-stillness of a great city—twice as solemn as the stillness of any desert—for it covers the tumultuous heaving of concentrated human passion. Marie could not rest. Anna had already gone; but Marie sat down by the window, and looked into the square. The sentinel walked again up and down, backward and forward. Was it the same? No, that could not be, as he would have been relieved. She thought she saw a figure, wrapped in a cloak, come from one of the doors, and look up at her window. How was that possible? These were only ladies' rooms! There it was, looking up again; walking close to the sentinel, and asking him a question; not allowed either. Ah, there was an altercation! The sentinel had threatened the figure with his bayonet; had called to the guard, and the figure was marched off, protesting furiously against such an indignity. The sentinel never looked up, but resumed his walk backward and forward, up and down. The tumult, however, seemed to have stirred up people in the palace. Marie heard some voices, some steps, and all again was quiet. Suddenly a low knock was given at her door, and Anna entered, pale, trembling, almost beside herself.

"Oh, Contesse Marie, Contesse Marie, it has come at last! I knew it would. Vladimir Konsky, the sentinel down

there, has given some great person up to the guard, for being in the square. They have taken him to the guard-room, recognised him, and now Vladimir will be taken for exceeding his duty. They'll send him to Siberia. I know they will." And Anna knelt down in the middle of the room, rocking herself to and fro.

"What are you saying, Anna? Are you mad?"

"I wish I were, oh, that I were! Oh, Contesse Marie, save him, he did it for love of you; he would follow us. Heaven only knows how he did it; but he said you had forgotten him, and he sent me, me, his foster-sister, to Berlin, to watch you, and let him know, instantly, if anyone made strong love to you, Contesse. I had to write, and send to him every week, and when we came here he followed us, because, he said, he would not trust me to protect you, and, though you had forgotten him, none other should be your lover, than he."

"Anna, what have you done?" said Marie sternly, "your secrecy has ruined your foster-brother; I shall not be able to save him!"

Anna threw herself on her knees before her mistress. "Oh, Contesse Marie," she exclaimed, "do not say so. You do not know what deep devotion I bear towards Vladimir Konsky, and, for his sake, towards you. For both, I would, instantly, sacrifice my life. Vladimir and I have played together as little tiny children. His noble mother died at his birth, and it always appeared to me that my own humble Polish mother had also been his, and that we were both her children, only of different degree. I could not refuse him, when he found me in Warsaw, in a great lady's service: made me leave it, and come to you in Berlin. He was sure you would not know me, as I was away with an uncle on the frontier, in a little place called Taporowitz."

"During the few years you lived in your childhood with his father, on the estates—"

"Oh, do not interrupt me, but let me own all. Vladimir had told me that he would never give you up; that he had taken a great oath never to relinquish you, and that he must keep that oath; besides, he owed it to his country, that you should return, and never become estranged from it. It was to him I wrote, when you found me asleep in your bedroom, telling him of our dreadful journey to St. Petersburg. I never sent the letters direct to Warsaw, but had to take them to a small catholic church, where a priest took charge of them. What Vladimir has been about, I do not know, but he seems to know a great many people, to become acquainted with all that happens to us; to have means to go and come anywhere. Oh, I am afraid he has become a conspirator, not that I think it wrong for a true Pole to be such, but then there is the danger. He sent me a short note by that same priest the very hour we left Berlin, and I never shall make out how he could have done it in the time—he must have been near us then—that he should guard you himself in St. Petersburg, as it was doubtful whether he might be able to communicate with me here. I was never, never, to mention it to you, under whatever disguise I might see him. But how has he come here, how has he got into the Palace? Ah, he must play a desperate game, and he must have some great friends, and a very very great deal of money to do it! I had noticed him two days ago, but my constant dread, that he would appear somewhere near us, made me fancy it was Vladimir. Yesterday I was sure that the sentinel down there, for part of the day, was my foster-brother, Vladimir Konsky."

Marie, who had sat quite still, her hands closely pressed together, rose, and asked Anna to get up. Her voice

sounded a little hollow, when, after an effort, she began to speak: "Anna, you have done wrong; it is no use denying it. However much you loved Vladimir, you ought to have been candid with me, and *you* ought to have told him that he was making a spy of you. Did you say that they have taken him prisoner, or what was it?"

"They have locked him up in the guard-room for excess of duty, or something, I don't know what; but, Contesse, if the least noise is made about it, it must be found out how he got there and who he is, and then—Siberia."

"I do not know if I may venture to see the Empress through the good word of the Baroness; but I will try," said Marie, firmly. "And I will see the Emperor, too; as yet, I know of nothing, that I would not give my word of honour, it was mere folly, and I shall try what courage and candour can do. Now go to bed, Anna, and sleep if you can; come early, as I must try to see the Baroness before any one of the imperial family is moving."

Marie did not go to sleep, nor to rest; but sat in her easy chair, thinking over the occurrences of the last few years. "It is the result of mine own short-sightedness," she said to herself, "I ought to have known the Polish character better. He would not depend upon me, but must jeopardise name, life, and cause, as if I should ever tear those early recollections out of my heart. There is an end to it now. I shall never be able again to leave him out of sight, and may God grant I can get him away, and beyond the frontier."

The morning came, not hazy as ours are in the early winter, but bright and sharp, bringing signs of a thin coating over the Neva. Marie became more anxious, as the inevitable necessity to face this great misfortune rose plainly before her, and was glad to see even Anna's worn and troubled countenance.

"Anna, you must not look like that, there is a great deal to be done, and no one must know how far we are implicated in the matter. Have you an idea when Vladimir will be called before the officer in command?"

"Not before twelve o'clock, I think."

"And, pray, where do you get all your information from?"

Anna reddened a little. "From Monsieur Louis, who is attached to one of the prince's households, and who came here with us from Berlin."

"Oh," said Marie, "can he be trusted?"

"Oh, yes, Contesse Marie, he would try to please me, and he thinks you the most beautiful lady he ever saw, and would lay down his life for you!"

"Very kind of him, but I do not require that; only we might want some one with a little discretion."

"And, besides," Anna whispered, "he also wishes to get away from here;—oh, don't I!"

"Go now, Anna, and see if you can find the *femme de chambre* of the Baroness, and ask if I can see her for one minute, as I do not feel well and want to be excused from attendance to-day."

Anna went and soon returned with the answer, that the Baroness would see Marie at once.

Marie and Anna again crossed that ominous square, but neither looked at the sentinel this time. The Baroness was a little excited.

"I expected this, *ma chère I'ai entendue quelque chose; il-y-avait un fracas hier soir.*" And coming up to Marie, she looked her straight in the face: "*dites moi donc la verite, ma chère*, as I should expect it from Marie Leckzinski.' And Marie, without circumvention, did tell the whole tale, to which the Baroness listened with great attention, and replied:

"It is sad and dangerous, but for my old friend I would do much, and also for your own sweet sake. "*Ce Vladimir est fou; on ne vous mangerait pas ici!*"

"I shall see the Empress in half an hour—remain here—I shall tell *her* all, then she can judge if she *can* help you. *She*, even, is not omnipotent in St. Petersburg." The Baroness placed her hand on Marie's shoulder.

"*Ma chère*, Marie, you must kneel to the Empress, and even to the Emperor, should it be necessary."

"To the Emperor, Baroness!" exclaimed Marie, "to him who—"

"Hush, *pas un mot de plus; il le faut.*"

There was an end to all objection. Marie laid her hand on her heart, a movement that always gave her courage, and appeared reconciled to her task.

The Baroness was with the Empress. Suddenly she rushed into her room, took Marie's hand, and said:

"*Vîte, à-présent, ma chère. Courage, beaucoup de courage.*"

In her sumptuous morning room the Empress of Russia reclined in an immense chair; when Marie entered by the private door she raised her eyes and looked at her earnestly.

"Come here, Marie Leckzinski, whose family has owned a king, a queen, and the mother of another king. I was charmed with you when I saw you; I loved you later, I might say, and I must lose you. I know you had better return to Berlin. You shall be free this day. Go quickly, Marie." And the countenance of the Empress became anxious: "*Et l'autre*, Marie?"

"Ah, your Majesty," said Marie, "*c'est seulement, ce pauvre Vladimir, mon cousin; il est fou assurement, oh, Votre Majesté*, on my knees I implore you, save him!" And Marie finished her sentence in German, a language always sweet to the Empress's ears.

"I *cannot* save him, Marie; but I will help you to ask the Emperor." Her Majesty nodded to the Baroness, who disappeared.

Marie had risen at the Empress's command.

"You must at once ask his Majesty for permission to allow a cousin, who by some fatality has followed you and become embroiled here, to return to Warsaw. Leave the rest to me, but you must be humble, Marie Leckzinski. I imprint this kiss as a farewell. You will receive your instructions. It was *my* fault, not yours. You have acted nobly throughout. Marie, I trust you, and I shall answer for you. There is no political intrigue here? I never meddle in that."

Marie's clear eye was raised up.

"Your Majesty may trust me. I know of none."

"Then keep him out of it, *ma chère;* and go to Berlin or Paris. Stay not in Warsaw, you will both be watched," softly answered the Empress. Hesitating a little, she added: "This in confidence, Marie. I tell you, because *I* brought you here. *Prenez cela, ma chère.*"

The Empress gave a miniature of herself to Marie, who kissed it with an impulse of real gratitude.

A few hasty steps were heard, the private door opened, and the Emperor Nicolas stood before Marie; the old Baroness, now white and trembling, entered too, and kept guard at the door.

"Your Majesty," said the Empress, "we are in trouble, and come to you to help us before you hear false reports."

The Emperor's brow began to knit, but the Empress continued bravely: "*Cette belle enfant* has a cousin, who, unknown to her, followed her to St. Petersburg, and got embroiled last night, thinking he ought to watch her that no one might gain her heart. Will you give him a free pass to leave at once and return to Warsaw, as he is now in the guard-room?"

"*Ah, quelle follie,*" said the Emperor sternly; he is a Pole, I see; some intrigue here. *Dites moi,* Contesse Marie?" And he turned his full enquiring gaze on Marie.

There was no help; this was the moment. "*Votre Majesté,* I implore you, save him!" And Marie knelt to the man who had deprived her parents of home and country. "I give you *my* word of honour there is no intrigue. Her Majesty trusts me."

And the kind Empress laid her hand on her husband's arm, and looked at him with those sweet eyes that never lost their power over him.

Nicolas regarded the beautiful girl before him; saw that truth spoke in every lineament of her face, held out his hand to raise her, and in a little milder tone remarked with his natural sagacity:

"I trust you, Contesse Marie, not him. He shall go without even being questioned. Forget not this hour when temptation arrives. I trust *you!*"

Marie kissed the imperial hand, as her heart was swelling with gratitude; the monarch turned to his wife.

"Are you satisfied, *ma chère?*"

"Merci," nodded the Empress, pushing a little slip of paper to him, "just your Majesty's signature." The lines ran: "Allow Vladimir Konsky to pass, and give him free passage to Warsaw." Quick, like lightning, had the Emperor seen the name and stored it in his memory; he signed "Nicolas." Marie received the paper, curtsied very very low, handed it to the Baroness, who said: "I will see that it goes into the right hands." And, at a nod from both sovereigns, Marie was led from the room by her old protectress and friend.

In the corridor, appeared Anna, looking for but one sign; that sign was given, and the foolish girl could scarcely suppress her rising tears.

"And now, Anna," said Marie, on entering the room, "quick, give me something. I cannot cry, I never could since that night, long, long ago. I shall be suffocated." Marie was as pale as death, but recovered herself by a great effort. She was a brave girl, and had learned that her life would not be bedded on roses.

Within a quarter of an hour a letter arrived from the Baroness, to say that Vladimir Konsky had been liberated, and would leave St. Petersburg within two hours, to return direct to Warsaw; that neither Marie nor her maid must try to see him here. Offence might have been given elsewhere by last night's affair, and in order that no future danger might befall Marie, the Empress had accorded her her *congé*, and she might leave for Berlin at her pleasure, all would be in readiness. At the bottom were the words in pencil: "*Leave as soon as possible, within twenty-four hours, it will be best.*"

Marie understood, and went to work. Her trunks from Berlin had never been opened, as she had to adapt her dress to new rules, on becoming maid of honour to the Empress. Her orders were given to Anna, and without other assistance she packed all the Russian wardrobe, to leave it behind for the Baroness to dispose of; on that point Marie was determined to have her own way. "I return as I came, save that little miniature."

A letter of farewell to the Baroness was delivered that evening, and the answer returned, that early in the morning the travelling carriage would be ready. Anna and Monsieur Louis managed the rest. At eight o'clock on the following day, a close carriage with some travelling trunks, and two passengers inside, rolled from the inner square of the palace, and Marie Leckzinski left the roof, that gilded though it was, had been a prison to her. Anna ejaculated a fervent "Thank God!" when they saw St. Petersburg behind them.

Marie Leckzinski had played out one part of her life. What would be the next? During her cold journey down to Tilsit, where they were to change their route, Marie had reviewed the changing scenes she had passed through: those dreary days in her early childhood, in a dull London street; the wild life on the Konsky estates with Vladimir and his father; the mysterious years in the "House Konsky," under the protection of the old servant; the time spent with companions of her own age in the convent of St. Ursula; the bright stay in Berlin, and the short and brilliant episode in St. Petersburg, all passed before her. Should she again return under the tutelage of others, or direct her own course in future? We have all our "guiding-star" in this life, that draws us somewhere, and Marie's was Vladimir Konsky. It was not love, it was necessity that attracted her. Countess Thiele was rich, Vladimir was poor; Countess Thiele had friends, Vladimir was friendless. It was a mental toss up between the two, and Vladimir gained the day. Marie knew that he needed her support; he was the only Polish being that called to her for help, and she determined to go to him: it would be easy to find him in Warsaw.

Marie was accustomed to do everything in a straightforward way, but how to get to Warsaw with Anna, who must go with her, would tax all her ingenuity. At Tilsit, the Russian courier who had accompanied them, was to leave, and Marie had been furnished with a letter to a high Prussian official there, that he was to provide for her further journey to Berlin. This letter must never be delivered! Marie persuaded the courier to drive to a small hotel, and make little fuss about them; he, glad to return home to St. Petersburg, did so. Next morning, two plainly dressed Polish girls went to the bureau for passports, and asked for two to Warsaw, across the frontier, to enter the service of

high families. Anna was the spokeswoman, and coaxed so prettily in her broken German, that the officer was persuaded into giving them to Marie Leckzinski and Anna, two young Polish women travelling back to Warsaw, to re-enter service there. They certainly referred to the owner of the hotel, who said they had come from St. Petersburg (where they had been in service), with a Russian courier of some high family, who most likely had taken back their passport. Anna's glib tongue and Marie's pretty face were not without influence, and the irregularity to let two young women, who brought no passport and were not of Tilsit, pass, was committed.

The quickest road was taken, and Marie Leckzinski was again on Polish ground. Her heart beat high. She could have stretched out her arms to embrace that earth, or knelt down to kiss it. The true old enthusiasm was now glowing in her heart, and, for a moment, the promise to the Emperor and Empress was forgotten. Marie felt as if she could have taken the Polish flag into her own hand, and marched at the head of her compatriots against the world. They reached Warsaw in the evening in a dusty old post-chaise, and Anna, who had been a little pale and abstracted, burst into tears, when she saw her old home again. Marie herself was changed. It seemed as if a feeling, too mighty for her to overcome, drew her onward; as if all the old Polish grandeur rose before her; as if she saw those Polish noblemen, in their national dress, hold conclave to choose the worthiest as king; as if they asked resuscitation at her hands; and as if she must pour out the last drop of her heart's blood to do that which was asked of her. She drew herself up under these enthusiastic feelings, her head erect, her eyes full of fire, her hands uplifted, she turned and looked round—some bearded Russian soldiers were just passing and hustling a poor Polish runaway

along between them. Marie bent her head, she felt the degradation of her country.

The luggage was taken to a quiet hotel, where Anna was known; the post-chaise sent away, and Marie at once sat down to write to Countess Thiele a full account of the reasons that obliged her to leave St. Petersburg, and made her resolve to try and protect her cousin, Vladimir Konsky. She gratefully thanked the Countess for the motherly kindness she had bestowed on her, which she could never, never forget. Anna had promised to take the letter somewhere, where its safe transmission was sure, she knew, but returned in an hour, with a terror-stricken face.

"Contesse Marie—oh, no, I am to say only Marie now, but I do forget—something has happened."

"Pray, Anna, do not torture or deceive me, tell it me plainly."

"You will be shocked; here is the letter back again. Countess Thiele is dead; she died about a week ago. We could not have had the sad news. A friend from Berlin sent here to our good priest, and added that you were sole heiress, under the will, as the Countess had made no secret of it. She died, unexpectedly, from a severe fall." Anna folded her hands reverently: "May the Holy Virgin protect her soul, she was kind to me, and loved you, Contesse Marie; Marie, I mean."

Marie pressed her hands tightly together. Her heart was sick, but no tear would come to relieve it. "And I was ungrateful, I was ungrateful," she murmured. "Thank Heaven, she will not have been aware of it, and her last moments will have held my memory dear; it is perhaps better so, for I feel nothing on earth would now persuade me to return to that life again."

"The priest," said Anna, "is most anxious to see you, as

soon as possible, as he has important matters to communicate to you ; but I told him you must first rest a little from your long journey, and then he was to come in the morning."

"No, no, Anna, I cannot rest. I have to go somewhere else. To the 'House Konsky!'"

"To-night! To that old haunted place?"

"Yes, to-night! I shall have no rest till I have been there. Something impels me to go. Get a dark lantern, as quickly as you can, and, if you are afraid, I can go alone."

"I am not afraid," said Anna, shaking a little; "I'll get the lantern at once."

Two dark figures slipped into the open door of the "House Konsky," and passed through its dusty corridors, halls, and rooms. Further down into the cellar they went, where human feet had not trod, they thought, for many a year, and where one of those figures knew that something she valued, was hid. The smaller figure clung to the other, as they passed on, in this dreary, desolate place. The lantern threw just enough light to guide their way. Here it was, Marie touched it, that relic of her childhood, it had not been removed. Hark! what was that? A sound, a step, coming nearer and nearer. Anna had thrown back her hood, and taken hold of Marie. "Oh, what, what, who, who is that?" she exclaimed, with chattering teeth.

"Something human, you may be sure, Anna; the step is very firm. I think I know who it is; be not afraid, you will see directly; it will be Vladimir Konsky, your foster-brother."

The step had come down, and entered the cellar. Marie turned on the full light, held up the lantern, and said in clear tones: "I am sure it is you, Vladimir Konsky."

"The saints be praised," cried a manly voice, "Marie

Leckzinski, you here? No king or emperor shall ever rob me of you again, Marie, my queen, my all!"

And Vladimir behaved like one demented; he rushed up to his cousin, took those dear hands, lantern, and all, kissed them respectfully, and wept like a great big baby over them, over his recovered treasure. Some one pulled his coat, and he turned round; Anna, his foster-sister looked up into his face.

"Ah, it is you, my good Anna; thank you, thank you, you have been a faithful guardian to her, my all on earth," he exclaimed.

Suddenly he recollected himself. "Marie, you must go, you must go instantly. Others will be here shortly, almost directly: others whom you do not know!"

"Others! and pray who are these others?" said Marie firmly. "I know, Vladimir, they are conspirators!"

"And you, Marie Leckzinski, dare call them so?" exclaimed Vladimir, with Polish impetuosity.

"I dare call them so; I dare, till they can do something better for their country; but let them come. I hear them. We shall see!"

There they stood, those three, listening to the tramp, tramp, tramp of the coming cautious steps. They descended: nearer and nearer they came, and, within a few minutes, that old dusty cellar was filled with other dark figures. Some of noble, some of wild and reckless bearing.

"Who is here? Who are these?" asked they in chorus.

"I will tell you," answered Vladimir; "but why do you come all at once? It is not cautious."

"We met upstairs; coming in one by one," was the short answer.

Some had lanterns, some had none. Those who had, held them up to see who stood beside Vladimir, and their eager

gaze became more eager still, when they found they were women. Vladimir Konsky drew himself up to speak, when a light hand was laid on his arm, and Marie Leckzinski bravely went forward, stood in their midst, threw back her hood, revealed that beautiful face, and spoke to those assembled:

"Poles! I am Marie Leckzinski, the lateral descendant of one of the old Leckzinskis, and the cousin of Vladimir Konsky. I have just arrived from St. Petersburg, where, for a short while, I was maid of honour to the Empress of Russia, the wife of him who told you, five years ago, in plain terms, that he *would* be obeyed, and would allow no backsliding from your new allegiance. Poles, your apparent leader, Vladimir Konsky, followed me there, and, to save him from being sent to Siberia, I had to promise that I would not allow him to enter into any conspiracy against Russia. When I gave that promise, I did not know, perhaps, what I did, but, if I can, I mean to keep it, or myself apprise the Emperor of it, and throw down the gauntlet first. I am not afraid; Marie Leckzinski knows no fear, or she would not be standing here. I am beyond the suspicion that I pander to the wishes of our conquerors and oppressors, or I should not have returned to Warsaw, and to the cellar of "the house Konsky" for a relic of our childhood, and in the hope to meet my cousin here. Indeed I do not fear your reproaches. I fear for other things, and I want you to listen to me if you will."

"Speak, then, we will listen," was the rather sullen answer.

"Poles, we, or rather our ancestors, have lost our birthright." ("No, no, we have not.") Yes, we have, we have thrown it away in the hour of our greatness, in the hour of our power. When we saw to our right and to our left empires and kingdoms arise, with whom we had been equal, aye, who had sued to us, then we ought to have remembered that the strong ought to

remain strong. But we squandered our strength in squabbles; we allowed the Saxon strangers to ascend our Polish thrones, and spend our wealth; we drove the Polish sovereigns into exile—we reaped our reward. The stranger came, and divided our lands. All your wild enthusiasm will be whisped away, like the spray of the sea, by that indomitable military power in the north, and by that evergrowing power of industrial advancement to the west of us. I, myself, am a true Pole; to-day I felt it strongly. I would lay my life down for my country in an instant; but what of that? Who would *not* do so? Only a mean despicable being. But not one life would I sacrifice, if I thought it useless; and it is useless. Poles, before you attempt to dash your swords against those Russian ones, you have to do higher things, which I am afraid you will never do. Go home, rest quiet in your homesteads, work, preserve every thing Polish you can, teach your children their own tongue, teach your peasants and servants to work and become thrifty; encourage Polish trade, Polish work, Polish industry. Poles, be wary, become strong, and there may, one day, in the far distant time, come a wave of civilization, that may regain Sclavonic nationalities some recognition, if we, or our descendants are prepared.—*Then* there may be some hope for Poland."

"Never, never; the sword must regain our liberty."

"It never will. I tell you I have watched and learned. I have been to Berlin and St. Petersburg; the former I respect, the latter I fear. What are *you* against them? Nothing; you cannot prevail!"

"We shall; we call you traitress!"

"Me?" exclaimed Marie, now drawn up to her full height. "Me, you call traitress! Ha, that shows why you lost your birthright. You will not learn, you will not listen! And I, whom you call traitress, will tell you your doom. To the

voice of reason you will lend no ear; lend an ear then to the voice of prophecy! It is hard, I know, to be quiet, and submit to wrong and oppression; but what will you do when there is no choice? You have no choice! Go on: hold meetings, buy swords and guns, involve your friends, your dependents, sacrifice life, and you will sacrifice something far higher, you will sacrifice the last vestige of your nationality; you will not be content till your children will be taught the Russian language in their schools, till Russian will be preached from your pulpits, till Russian will be spoken in your halls of justice, till Russian rule will sweep away the last Polish remnants left you—your very Polish names! I shall say no more; when I shall be old, when I shall, perhaps, be in my grave, it will come to pass! It would be useless to say more. And here, before you all, I, who have been trained from childhood for national vengeance; I, who was made to swear it on my parent's death-bed, I take this symbol (and Marie drew out a Polish relic, hanging on a black ribbon, round her neck, nearest her heart), here, I give up this relic, on which I was made to vow *that*, which it is against reason to keep, and stand, in future, a free woman from all kind of mysterious influence. Openly shall *my* warfare be waged, open as the day!"

"False, false," they exclaimed; "there is no truth in it. She has learned it abroad. Away with traitors; let us to business?"

"I *shall* go," exclaimed Marie; "you do not know me; Come Vladimir, I bent my knee to Emperor Nicolas for you. Come, and leave them for me!"

Vladimir hesitated. Marie was, however, prepared to lead him away, having given the map to Anna, when the whole multitude turned fiercely round, and called Vladimir Konsky back. "You will be outlawed, if you go; we shall shed no

blood here, but you will not be safe! Andreas Sobeisky, come forward, and be our leader!"

There was a shrill sound, and all listened: "Quick, quick, we are detected," was heard on all sides, and within a couple of minutes one figure after another vanished, while Marie, like a true heroine, remained last, with poor frightened Anna and Vladimir. They knew another outlet, and as they passed the corner they saw a military detachment march up and surround the house.

They hurried along, and at a little distance were met by their old friend, the priest, who knew more than Marie was aware of, and breathlessly entreated them quickly to follow him. To his own rooms did he take them, no one would look for them that night, and by dawn they must be away, as they were already watched.

When they had reached the quiet street and house where the priest lived, and Marie, now fairly exhausted, had a little recovered, they were told by the priest that Vladimir had been followed since he left St. Petersburg, and that he was not safe in Warsaw another day. Marie would most likely share his fate and be also watched, the moment it was known she was there; she must, therefore, leave the town.

"Now you see," Marie said bitterly, "what you have done, Vladimir; had the soldiers arrived ten minutes sooner, how many families would have been ruined? Me, you drive from my country into exile. I call it exile, to be obliged, now that I am free, to leave Warsaw; and, perhaps, Poland. Here I might have spent usefully the fortune left me by the Countess, but how can I stay behind, when I know *you* must go!"

"And why not, Marie," said Vladimir, looking at her as if his very life depended on her answer. "Why not go and marry one of those Russian or Prussian princes or nobles, and forget Poland and Vladimir Konsky."

"And why?" answered Marie composedly. "Why should I? I am a Pole, and shall remain a Pole, wherever I go; but I shall try to make my name respected, and here you make me run away like a thief in the dark!"

"I, Marie? Not I. Our oppressor. Marie, will you become my wife before we start; or shall I despair?"

"You deserve it, Vladimir; Marie Leckzinski ought not to be doubted."

In an hour the priest had made Marie Leckzinski and Vladimir Konsky man and wife. Anna was the only witness. The priest found disguises and passports for all three; their luggage was forwarded direct to Berlin through his agency, and they travelled down to the Silesian frontier before it would be known that they were suspected; and crossed into Prussia near little Tagorowitz, where Anna's uncle lived, who had managed many hair-breadth escapes, and managed to outwit the patrol that had been sent into the village by the Austrian authorities from Galicia.

In Berlin, '*La Belle Polonaise*' paid only two visits; one to the cemetery where her benefactress rested; the other, to the great official who had the Countess's affairs in hand. To him, Marie gave power how to act, and transmit to her the sums, which the property would realize, to Paris. Vladimir and Marie were man and wife, were true Poles; you could have seen them sitting in the gardens of the Tuilleries, talking and enjoying that happiness, which they could enjoy as exiles. Marie knew it would be madness to let Vladimir go back, and so they lived among their exiled compatriots, doing their utmost to alleviate their wants and sorrows. Marie always composed, always clear in her intentions, honoured everywhere, and known as '*La Belle Polonaise*' in the saloons she frequented. When they were seen, the *belles esprits* said: "*Voyez 'La Belle Polonaise' et son Vladimir;*" and

now and then you might have found them in a lonely room in their house, children still, with the old map hung up, playing at the "House Konsky." It generally finished in the Queen of Poland giving her chamberlain a hearty kiss, and exclaiming:

"Oh, Vladimir, I wish we were in the old 'House Konsky,' and at home."

Home they never went, and Anna too remained, having met one day Monsieur Louis from St. Petersburg, who had kept heart and hand free for her sake, and offered both for her acceptance. Anna, in truth, became French, and the mother of French children; but Marie and Vladimir remained Poles in heart and spirit, and were childless.

SEÑOR PEDRO.

THE Duke of Saldanha gave a ball, and the great of Madrid were assembled there. He was of true old Spanish blood, and loved everything Spanish. It was a pleasure to go to the Duke's house: there were no French airs there; you felt you were in Spain; in Spanish society, and in good society too. People were anxious to get to the Duke's house; it was kept in such grand style, and you met people there you cared to see and speak to. Foreigners abound in Madrid, and they were here also; but the best of them. The embassies generally brought all their youngsters and those on their visiting lists. The chief attractions of the Duke's house were, however, the women. "If you want to see a Spanish beauty, go to the Duke of Saldanha's," was said to foreigners; "to him the old Spanish families go, and there you *may* meet with a true Donna still."

Lord Tyrconnel and the Hon. Mr. Murphy were "doing Spain," and anxious to see as much of Spanish society as possible; "the true Spanish style," they were asking right and left for, and were, consequently, performing no end

of vagaries, and getting into some undignified scrapes, to find "the true Spaniard, the real thing." The Duke of Saldanha's ball had been looked forward to by them with great expectation, and Lord Tyrconnel, a fair young Irishman, descanted in unmeasured terms on what he would say and do, to make love to a daughter of one of the old proud families.

The evening came. The Duke's house was ablaze with light; endless servitors, in Spanish costume, rushed about. The guests were fast arriving. Lord Tyrconnel and Mr. Murphy had been taken by one of the *attachés* of the English Embassy, as the ambassador was away, and would not be represented at the ball. They were early, and made up their minds to enjoy the *coup d'œil* of the various groups as they entered. The rooms began to fill; but there were such endless galleries and saloons, into which the company drafted, that it never became inconveniently crowded. Dancing was about to commence, and, as yet, Lord Tyrconnel had made but little way; he was evidently crushed in that grand throng, and the *attaché* did not know how to manage an introduction well. He had not been long in Madrid, and did not care about the Spanish people a bit, they bored him with their mighty airs; he had taken Lord Tyrconnel up to the Duke, who had smiled, and spoken a few words in French, which my Lord answered in a peculiar pronunciation, and there the matter ended. The Duchess had swept by him, and, looking up into his fresh fair face, had made him a very graceful Spanish curtsey. "The best thing he had seen that evening," said Lord Tyrconnel.

"Who is that? I say, Stanton, who is that entering the rooms now? that *is* the loveliest woman I have seen on the face of the earth," exclaimed my Lord.

"Don't know her, but she is very handsome," replied Stanton, the *attaché*.

"I don't think you do know any body. I suppose you keep in your own set here, as you did in old England. But look at that tall old man, who comes with her, he is magnificent, and there is a young one too, I suppose her brother. Murphy, I say, who *is* that young man?" And clutching hold of his friend's arm, he whispered: "By Jove, Murphy, that is Peter O'Flaherty, son of my father's bailiff."

"Nonsense, Tyrconnel, you are mad; the sight of that woman has turned your brain," responded Murphy.

"By the powers," continued my Lord, "look at them, now, do; he is offering her his arm, and being led by the old man up to the Duke and Duchess. Such a fellow, and such a woman. I'll go after them. I must see."

"Don't make a fool of yourself, Tyrconnel," said Murphy, holding back his friend.

"I shall do nothing rash, don't be alarmed, but I'll unmask that fellow; such impudence! I am not mistaken. I tell you I should know Peter O'Flaherty anywhere—even in the Sandwich Islands, sitting on a throne."

"Now you begin to joke I am not afraid. Richard is himself again, when he can cut a joke. Come along; Stanton is in a blue study, let's leave him, and try our own luck."

So tho two sauntered up the room, in a *nonchalant* manner to get into the precincts of the sacred circle, and here Lord Tyrconnel beheld fresh wonders.

"Look at Peter," he whispered to Murphy, "there he is, talking to the Duke de Saldanha; I caught a word in Spanish too, and the Duke is listening attentively. I can't stand it, to be bearded like that. I got three French morsels from his Grace's lips, and here is my father's bailiff's son discoursing with this mighty Spanish grandee, quite on equal terms."

"What is the use to make a fuss about it. Why don't you find out by what trickery it was done?"

"There, there, he is now going to dance with her. Oh, Peter, Peter, I wish I could—" The sentence was lost in the whirl of the slow waltz that began, and it made poor Lord Tyrconnel's head reel, to see the respectful, but very *empressé* manner, in which Peter O'Flaherty led the beautiful Donna round and round in the dance; retiring with her, after it, to the upper end of the room.

"I don't see how we shall dance to-night," said my Lord, grinding his teeth, "and I don't care to, now; that fellow Stanton is not fit to be an *attaché;* why, *I* would do the thing better. But there, in England, they never look to the fitness of people for any post. I suppose some old grandmother recommended him to somebody else's old grandmother. Now, look at him; there he is, standing, nodding his head to this and that English acquaintance, like a Chinese mandarin. Pshaw, the fellow ought to be in bed. I shall give up the idea of disporting myself in the graceful dance with Spanish beauties for this evening, at least, and go after game. I am determined to follow up, and unearth that man Peter. I'll prove too much for him."

"Don't get us into a mess, that is all *I* care for," said the cooler Mr. Murphy. "I'll stick to you, if you don't go too far."

For some time nothing could be done; the two young Irishmen looked on, made their own remarks, and at last became weary to see others dance, smile, talk, flirt, and otherwise enjoy themselves; so they walked on through two adjoining rooms and into the saloon where the "buffet" for refreshment stood. It was charged with all the dainties, fruit, ice, wines, &c., that could be desired by the most fastidious, and Lord Tyrconnel treading on the ball dress of a little Spanish damsel, and making his consequent excuses, was beginning a minor flirtation, when a shadow fell next to him, and there they stood—the beautiful Donna and Peter

O'Flaherty. Neither observed him; he heard Peter offer her various things in Spanish, and ask one of the attendants to hand them to him, and he saw with inward vexation the peculiar grace with which the Donna received Peter's attentions, not at all as if she were conscious they were coming from an inferior.

Lord Tyrconnel thought, now my time is come, and turned suddenly round:

"Mr. Peter O'Flaherty, most happy to see you here," he said; "we have missed you a long time in Ireland. Since when have you taken up service in mighty Spain?"

Peter O'Flaherty looked at the speaker, and made a respectful bow. "Ah, it is Lord Tyrconnel; I am sorry I was not aware of your Lordship's arrival in Madrid, as I might have been useful. My Lord has come with the embassy to-night, I suppose?"

"Yes, with that slow-coach, Stanton, but you have not answered my question, Mr. Peter, and you seem to be in very good company, won't you introduce me?"

Peter O'Flaherty had at first thought, that Lord Tyrconnel was pleased to meet him, and though a little abashed to be found in a new position, by one so much superior to him at home, had spoken with the utmost candour; but his quick Irish ear caught the ugly supercilious tone of my Lord, and he looked him full in the face, adding:

"Decidedly, my Lord, I shall be most happy to do so; the Donna speaks English."

"Donna Anna," he said, turning to the Spanish lady who was with him, "will you allow me to introduce to you Lord Tyrconnel, the eldest son of the Marquis of Templeton, my father's landlord and employer."

If Lord Tyrconnel had thought to humble Peter O'Flaherty, he was mistaken, those words had been spoken with peculiar emphasis.

The Donna was evidently sharp witted. She had drawn up her arched Spanish eyebrows, had cast a glance over Lord Tyrconnel from head to foot, measuring his bodily and moral length, and had curtsied as only her countrywomen can curtsey; she then added in a foreign accent:

"I can but speak little English, my Lord, I have only began a little while. Señor Pedro has taught me."

"Confound Señor Pedro," said Tyrconnel to himself. "I wish I could speak Spanish now." "And I," he said aloud to Donna Anna, can "speak no Spanish, some miserable French, and my own mother tongue; though I can but express myself imperfectly to Donna Anna, it will, I hope, not diminish in her eyes the value I place on the introduction."

"Señor Pedro's friends are welcome in our house, my Lord," replied the Donna, putting poor Peter into his right position by her delicate tact.

"May I have the honour of the next dance?" asked Tyrconnel, blandly.

"Oh, yes," answered the Donna; "Señor Pedro dances well, but generally you English dance strangely."

"Señor Pedro again," murmured Tryconnel. "Evidently the Donna cannot yet manage the English language in a complimentary way," thought he; "but those eyes would make one excuse anything."

He turned round to let Murphy see his triumph, as he led the Donna away; but Murphy had at last found genial company, and was chatting with a little French lady, as well as his broken French would let him.

Peter O'Flaherty followed dutifully behind, carrying Donna Anna's fan, perfectly unconcerned about his dangerous rival, and pointing out a favourable place for both, as they entered the dancing saloon. Lord Tyrconnel thought this was dancing; in the splendid large room, on the smooth floor,

with as graceful a woman as he had ever seen, and he fancied all this made him acquit himself better. As he returned with Donna Anna to their place, his looks spoke the admiration he felt, but he was checked by the earnest smile with which his partner held out her hand to Peter O'Flaherty, and said, in Spanish:

"A seat, Señor Pedro, I feel rather fatigued."

"Always Señor Pedro," thought Tyrconnel; "I believe he has bewitched her, and she is in love with him, I'll find out; I'll go as far as I can."

He remained by the Donna's side, trying snatches of conversation now and then with her or Peter, who stood on the other side. Presently, the tall old gentleman came walking up to them, with whom Lord Tyrconnel had seen them enter the room; he looked at Tyrconnel, as if he meant to say, Who is it?

"Lord Tyrconnel, from Ireland," said Peter O'Flaherty, introducing him to Donna Anna's father, but designedly avoiding to mention the old Señor's name. Peter was piqued at Lord Tyrconnel's manner and some odd remarks he had made; he felt that, whatever his astonishment, at seeing him where he was, might have been, Tyrconnel ought to have waited for an explanation till they met somewhere else the following day.

The old Señor could speak no other language but his own; he addressed a few words to Lord Tyrconnel, and then both again bowed politely.

"My father says," added Donna Anna, "that he will be pleased to see a friend of Señor Pedro in our house, my Lord."

"Many thanks, beautiful Donna; but I am not a friend of Señor Pedro, his father is my father's bailiff in Ireland."

"What is that, bailiff," asked Donna Anna, sharply; "is it servant, or is it employé?"

"The latter, you might say," answered Tyrconnel slightly.

Donna Anna had risen: "Then I think if you did not call Señor Pedro your friend, you ought not to have asked him to introduce you. I think you have insulted him and me. Good evening, my Lord."

"I shall have the honour of calling on you to-morrow, my Lord," said Peter O'Flaherty, pale as death.

Donna Anna swept away with a queenly air, taking her father's arm, and beckoning Señor Pedro to her side; she went up to take leave of the Duchess, and Lord Tyrconnel saw them go.

"I think, I went too far," he said to himself. "I think I was rude; but that fellow's cool impertinence in assuming such a position with people of standing, exasperated me. I wonder what he will say when he calls?"

Lord Tyrconnel could find neither Stanton, who had most probably long gone home, nor Murphy, so, being tired of Spanish society, as he called it, he also went to his hotel, a little uneasy at the reproof he had received from the proud and graceful Donna.

In the evening of the next day, Lord Tyrconnel and a party of young men, among whom were the Hon. Mr. Murphy, Mr. Stanton, the *attaché*, a young Baronet, a banker's son, and a very wealthy beau of the old school—all doing Spain, sat round the open balcony window of Tyrconnel's rooms in the hotel: smoking, drinking, and looking into the street to admire pretty Spanish women, or to nod to some passing acquaintance. A knock came at the door, and the servant announced "Señor Pedro O'Flarti," handing a card to Lord Tyrconnel.

"By Jove! it is he himself."

"Good evening, Lord Tyrconnel, I had hoped to find you alone, but I find you in good company," said Peter O'Flaherty.

"Please, make yourself at home, Señor Pedro, we are not as much advanced as you are in the customs of the country, so you can give us an instructive lesson."

"Why," asked O'Flaherty, "you do not want it, you have all good positions at home most likely, gentlemen, and are not adventurers." And he bowed to those present.

"Of course not, else they would not be my friends; but you know, Peter, we were good companions of old, there in Dublin, at College, and why should we not be now. A good companion is better than a bad friend."

"Perhaps so, my Lord, but I do not think I ever called myself your friend; I should be sorry for it, if I had done so."

"Eh, man; are you vexed?"

"With what? I only speak the truth, Lord Tyrconnel; and as I come to have an explanation with you on account of your evident concern last night that I should call myself your friend, I may as well make it now before witnesses." Peter O'Flaherty drew a chair to the table, and seated himself with perfect ease. "I think three of the faces I have seen in ould Ireland, all the better, they will be able to bear me out in what I say." Whenever Peter became excited, a little brogue would out. The gentlemen present began to listen with that *degagè* air, as if he might say anything for aught they should care.

"Gentlemen, I am Peter O'Flaherty, the second son of Lord Tyrconnel's father's bailiff; the murder is out—do not be shocked to be in such bad company, I'll relieve you of it soon. ("No, no, you were a good fellow at College, we remember you now.") Gentlemen, when a youngster, I began early to consider the ways of the world, and I made up my mind to learn something, in my own way, and then go and make good use of it My father was bailiff to Lord Templeton, as his forefathers had been, and so would be my

eldest brother; not a bad position either. *I* meant to go elsewhere. I worked hard at school, always in my own way, and got two scholarships; with these I went to College at Dublin. My father laughed and called me ambitious, but he let me go, giving me a small allowance. Here I did not succeed so well at first. I looked at the world differently than they did. Now, a man who has gone through the regular classical and mathematical studies is generally little use any where else but at home. But I could take no position at home. I should always have it cast in my teeth that I was the bailiff's son; so I made up my mind to learn that which would gain me the place I wanted elsewhere. I determined to become master of three languages, German, French, and Spanish; to study well my country's and general history; to be a pretty fair mathematician; learn something of the groundwork of science, and not despise the classics altogether, for they cultivate your intellect. But I got into hot water often and often, because I would prefer my own conceits in translation to the regular way. I tried to get into as good society as I could, because stiff and angular manners would not get me on in the world. I never put on airs, gentlemen, some of you know it; I always remained Peter O'Flaherty. I did get into some trouble and debt, but I paid it off since I have been here, though it bothered me much then. Well, gentlemen, my time was up, my course was finished, I took my degree, though that would be of no use to me at home. Now, a young nobleman who knew what I know, would have become a great man in the land; but plain Peter could see no way before him. There I sat in my dreary chambers at Dublin, revolving in my mind what I could do. Home was closed to me; Germany had brains enough, without my adding my little quantum; France, I was not clever

enough, I was not up to their mark. Spain—yes, I loved the Spanish language, I knew it best, and here good heads and quick wits might be wanted. I had little money to begin with, but I began. I wrote to my father that it was no use coming home till I had done something in the world, packed up my goods and chattels, and came straight to Madrid. Here I lived very retired and very sparingly for three months, during which time I had my eyes and ears open. I learned as much as I could about the country—its present state; began to speak Spanish fluently, tried to get hold of their manners. It is the manners of a people you must get! I succeeded; I made friends; a private secretary was wanted, no one could compete with me in knowledge; I had a turn for the political; I became private secretary to a distinguished nobleman, did him some great service, and made him my friend for life. Whenever I leave him as private secretary, I shall receive a post worth having."

"Peter, it sounds like a fairy tale; you seem to have succeeded so quietly, so well."

"Yes, by years of work, of buffeting and trouble; by more work and the exercise of the utmost discretion. I have now been here three years—have merely changed my name, so that they can pronounce it, have ever wisely remembered that my father is bailiff to a nobleman, and have never presumed on the position gained by my own labours; but, gentlemen, plain Peter O'Flaherty, who never treads upon other people's toes, must not be trod upon. I will not disturb you longer with my company, gentlemen. I'll see Lord Tyrconnel to-morrow. Good evening, gentlemen." Peter took his hat and went.

"No, no, don't go; you are a brave fellow! Come back, Peter."

But Peter was gone, and Lord Tyrconnel sat there very quietly; thinking, perhaps, who was the worthiest of the two to be called a gentleman.

"I say, Tyrconnel, what is the matter with him?" said Murphy; "I left you last night: did you get into any scrape with him?"

"Come to the Embassy," drawled Stanton, "if you are in a mess!"

"That's not much use, while you are there, old fellow," said Murphy.

They all expected Tyrconnel to say something, but Tyrconnel was not inclined; at last he said: "I made a mistake, I thought he had got by trickery what he has got by honest labour, and I am sorry. I'd shake hands with him this minute, if he were here."

"Bless me, Tyrconnel, he never means to call you out?"

"I hope not, I could not meet my father's bailiff's son."

"There you are again, man, with your pride," said the less conceited Murphy, "it is not that; suppose you were to fall, and I, who became answerable for you to your father. Good God! what is to be done?"

"Come to the Embassy," said Stanton again, "or bolt! It is no disgrace to bolt from a bailiff, or his son!"

"Don't make jokes now. Come Tyrconnel, let's talk it over quietly," Murphy rejoined anxiously.

He took Tyrconnel aside: "Tell me what you have done; is that beautiful Donna in it? Suppose we go and make an apology?"

"No, I won't," said Tyrconnel, "I'll never apologise to the bailiff's son. I said nothing else, but when she persisted to call him my friend, that he was not my friend, and told her his parentage. She said if he was no friend, I ought not to have asked him to introduce me, and I had insulted him and her as well; walking away like a queen."

"Hem, Lord Tyrconnel, here is a kettle of fish; she seems one of the old proud Spanish style—you are in for it. As far as I can see, she would not even accept an apology now."

"I don't care, let's wait till to-morrow. Say no more about it to them."

So the two went back to the table, when it was perceived that Tyrconnel wanted nothing more said about it, and merry jokes were cracked as the champagne went round, as if nothing had happened. Even Murphy could not get a word more out of Tyrconnel when the others were gone.

The Hon. Mr. Murphy had gone to Stanton at the Embassy the next morning, to see whether they could find out who the Donna and her father were, as no one seemed to know their name, and Peter had avoided mentioning it. Lord Tyrconnel was alone at a late breakfast, in a cool darkened room, a little nervous as to what the day would bring.

The servant announced "Señor Pedro O'Flarti," and immediately Peter entered.

"Good morning, Lord Tyrconnel, you are late."

"Yes, I am, Mr. Peter O'Flaherty, those fellows stayed late last night. Why did you rush away so?"

"My business was not with them, but with you, Lord Tyrconnel. However, I gave my explanation before them, and I am now come to know its result."

"What result; do you want me to make an apology?"

"On no, not in the least; an apology would not be accepted by Donna Anna. We must fight."

"Fight you, Peter, my father's bailiff's son? I will not."

"But you must, Lord Tyrconnel, or I shoot you dead first, and then myself." Tyrconnel had not noticed it, but somehow the door had closed on Peter. "Look here, Lord Tyrconnel, you have jeopardised all I have fought and

laboured for for years. I began the world with a firm determination to gain a good position for myself, if not at home, elsewhere; and I mean to carry it out. You ought to have asked an explanation from me privately, why I appeared to be thought equal to men of rank and standing here; you would not wait, but insulted me before the Donna, by presuming that I had given myself higher airs to her and her father than I deserved. I told you yesterday, to be successful in a foreign country, one must understand the people's manners. Now, you, my Lord, do not understand this; but I do. If I do not fight you I must give up my position for ever, and the Donna, who is my betrothed. I do not think her father would wish me to leave, and I am sure Donna Anna loves me sufficiently to marry me still; but it would be unbearable to live with Spaniards of note, if they thought you—a coward. *I* could not; I am plain Peter O'Flaherty; but Señor Pedro O'Flarti must be respected if he would keep his head up here."

"Suppose I flatly refuse to fight, what then?"

"I give you two minutes to consider, Lord Tyrconnel, one man is as good as another! I cannot throw up all I have laboured for for years, not mentioning that it will go hard with me to lose the Donna, merely for your pleasure to have implied I was a trickster. I must leave Madrid to-morrow, if we do not fight, and I do not choose to. Life would be unbearable to me if I failed. Here is the revolver—either we fight or we end both here!"

"Send your friend, Peter, for to-morrow morning," said Lord Tyrconnel hastily.

"Good morning, Lord Tyrconnel," answered Peter politely, "he will be here in half-an-hour, to see your second."

As Peter passed out, Murphy met him; but he went by with a slight bow, not giving Murphy time to speak to him.

"Well, what is up now, Tyrconnel? I met the fire-eater outside."

"We must fight, to-morrow morning. His second will be here in half-an-hour."

"Why did you not offer to apologise?"

"Wouldn't accept it; said he must leave Madrid to-morrow if he did not fight, or be called a coward. Didn't choose to do it; so if I would not fight he would finish us at once; laid the revolver on the table! Then I agreed; I thought I might as well have a chance, and put my pride in my pocket."

"He is a brave fellow, Mr. Peter O'Flaherty. May the stars be propitious, and neither of you get anything but a scratch. So it will be business?"

"I am going out, Murphy, so you see that man; sure to be somebody. Peter understands how to do things, I can see. Agree to swords; very early hour; place, *they* will know best. Two seconds each, you and Sir Joseph Lifford; mind, a doctor, and no fuss. Good bye, I shall be in some time to dinner, and settle everything else to-night."

Lord Tyrconnel did come in to dinner, looking a little haggard; he heard that two very stylish looking men had been, one a Señor, the other an officer, and settled matters in a very polite way. Both spoke a little French and a few words of English, and so Murphy and Sir Joseph, who had been sent for, managed to come to terms. "Most decent men I ever saw, no blustering at all. Peter must be thought somebody."

"Well, I am sorry, poor fellow, I suppose it would go harder for him to lose all, than I my father's broad acres, which I never did anything to gain. I feel I have done an injustice, that worries me. Murphy, will you promise me that they shall never know at home with whom I fought? [illegible]ld ruin old Flaherty and the whole family."

"Don't get melancholy, man; come, cheer up. A little blood-letting will do you good, and there shall be no more."

"Ah, you don't know me; when the crisis comes I shall get hot, the Irish blood will be up, and then I may go too far. I always do. That is why my father would not trust me alone."

Lord Tyrconnel spent that evening several hours in his room, leaving his instructions in writing. Murphy settled all business, keeping up a light heart as well as he could.

In the grey of the morning, three gentlemen, wrapped in cloaks, left the hotel, driven in a close carriage to the Campo Santo. Here some figures were already moving about in the dusky light. The place was chosen; the seconds ready. On Pedro's side two other figures stood in the background, supposed to be the doctor and his assistant. The sign was given —the duel began. Tyrconnel seemed a little nervous—Pedro cool, and very careful, giving his thrusts rather with the determination to disarm than to wound. Tyrconnel was slightly wounded in the arm, Peter not hurt; when the former changed tactics and got excited; his thrusts became wild, and just as the seconds meant to interfere, he rushed upon Peter, and drove his sword into his side. Peter fell—the blood gushed out—Tyrconnel stood like one demented. "Off with him, quick, called the seconds." But before he was got away, a slight dark figure had thrown herself on Pedro, her hair hanging loosely round her; it was Donna Anna, who, determined to see the duel herself, and to see her lover's name avenged, had come in disguise with the doctor.

"My own Pedro! my brave Pedro! you will look at me? Better to be brave and good, than to be high and rich. Oh, Pedro, Pedro! live for me and my father!" And Donna Anna wept and sobbed.

This sight almost unmanned Tyrconnel, whom they had great trouble to lead off, as his own slight wound needed dressing.

Gently and carefully they moved Señor Pedro. When the doctor had stilled the bleeding, the Donna insisted he should be taken to her father's house, and that she would precede him in the carriage waiting for her, so that as little commotion as possible might be made.

By the time the Calle d'Alcala was reached, people began to be about; and when Pedro was carried up the broad stairs of the grand house, he looked like one dying. Donna Anna's father met them; he was greatly shocked, but it was impossible to deny it, Pedro had risen a thousandfold in his estimation. There seemed little hope for life. Pedro looked at the old Spaniard as if he wanted to say something.

Anna's father bent down to him; and Pedro whispered: "Manage that there is no enquiry, no pursuit. Let him stop till I can see him."

After these few words, it appeared really as if the film of death were covering those bright blue Irish eyes, and Anna was entreated to retire. She went, proud of Pedro, but heartbroken at the little hope there seemed to be of his life.

One day and night Death stood by that bed demanding his prey. Perhaps, the consciousness of the great love he should leave behind, gave Pedro strength to combat the dread enemy. On the morning of the second day, a gentle cool hand was allowed to be laid on his forehead, and, as his eyes were raised, they met such a loving gaze that the sympathetic feeling made a tear roll through his lashes down his wan cheek. This precious tear was kissed away—and Pedro gaining new power of life, was able to speak a few words that evening.

Tyrconnel had been taken to the Embassy after all, into Stanton's room. The Ambassador was away, and it was all kept quiet. Here he was not asked for; as duels pass over lightly in Spain, and as no actual death had occurred, no one made a stir. A small note was given to Tyrconnel one evening, when he sat in the darkened room making his arrangements with Murphy to return home as soon as possible. "Look at this, Murphy, the Donna asks me to go and see Peter, as he is pretty well out of danger now. You had better come with me, as I am still a little shaky."

Tyrconnel went at once; they found a servant waiting for them. Both friends were a little surprised to see the magnificent house into which they were ushered; it was beyond their expectation.

The old Señor received them, and conducted them into Pedro's chamber. Here they found the Doctor and Donna Anna sitting by the window.

Tyrconnel waited for no one, but quietly going up to Peter, he held out his hand, saying a little tremulously: "Will you take it, old boy? friends for ever now. I shall go home and tell them all!"

"Forgive me, my Lord, I could not have acted otherwise; indeed, I blame myself; but when I think it all over again, I could not have borne it—to lose Donna Anna!"

"Be quiet, Pedro," said a soft voice, "you must not talk. We are friends now. My Lord will value Señor Pedro's friendship in future."

"Ah, Donna Anna, I beg a thousand pardons. I ought to have known that no mere trickery could have gained such a position in a family like yours."

They parted—friends now—Anna's father was one of the first political men in Spain, and Pedro has a great career before him; he was to add the name of the family

to his own on his marriage with Anna. Lord Tyrconnel went home somewhat changed, and the Marquis of Templeton began to think that travelling had done his son, who had been an idle fellow before, a deal of good; for he became earnest, looking for some purpose in life, and finding plenty to do on his father's vast estates in Ireland. Old O'Flaherty could never hear enough of the story: "It was wrong, very wrong—but I like the speerit, oh, I like the speerit of it." Pedro showed, shortly after the great event of his life, that his old home was not forgotten, and Donna Anna's picture graces the walls of his father's best room.

THE BEAUTY OF DEAL.

THE great Premier was walking last summer on the greensward that skirts the beach between Walmer and Deal. So was Harry Hotspur. Harry was a peculiar, thinking (not thoughtful, that's another thing) fellow, and had thrown himself on the grass, watching his brother Edward and some youngsters playing at football, when he saw some one coming. Speculating on people's appearance was bread and cheese to Harry. He stared at the advancing figure, and thought: "You are somebody." The nearer the figure came, the more he understood its peculiar swing, the higher Harry held up his head, and stared: "You are a very clever and remarkable man, I am sure of it. You are not smart, but you are grand!" The great man stood still for a moment; he looked around, evidently taken by the scene: the pretty green meadows, in which the flitting shade of richly-foliaged trees played hide and seek; the rising upland of Walmer, interspersed with white villas and clumps of richer trees still, straight on the outlines of Walmer Castle; to the left, the gently heaving sea; right before him, the merry group of children playing at football, and

over it all, the glow of early evening—it pleased him: he looked twice; Harry watching him all the time. With a jerk, the great man went on, and then Harry, coming to his senses, called out to his brother: "Edward, Edward, look, look; there he goes; it is he, it is he?"

"What do you mean?" said Edward, intent on his game.

"Why, it's the Premier!"

"Oh," called out Edward, regarding the great man's back with veneration.

Harry went on thinking. All his imaginative faculties had been stirred, and now held full play in his brain. "He works too hard," he said to himself. "I couldn't work like that, never shall, and I think sometimes what foolery it is to be hanging here on aunty's skirts, waiting for her money. I shall tell her to-night I shall go home, and begin to work in right earnest. She had better keep Edward—he suits her far more. I wonder what *he* does now in the evening. What a determined pace *he* walks at. I think I shall take to walking, it must do a fellow good, and one can think all the way. I shall just go up to Deal, and saunter along the beach; perhaps I may meet with that beauty, I have heard so much about."

So Harry left the others to go on with their game; turned his back on genteel Walmer, and walked towards matter-of-fact Deal. Past the old and venerable ivy-covered Deal Castle; the flag-staff; on to the Esplanade, by the Pier; right up to the north-end. Here he saw the luggers drawn up on the beach and the Deal watermen standing leisurely about.

"I wonder," said Harry to himself, "who does keep these fellows. They do seem to take life leisurely. Now, with an Italian sun and a striped shirt and cap, and they would make excellent Neapolitan lazzaroni! They look well fed,

too; and what did always strike me most, they look for all the world like lords of their own lands, as if the beach and the sea, putting the luggers and the boats out of the question, belonged to them, and were their own special property. As for the Goodwin Sands, there is no doubt about it, that the Deal boatmen think they were created, and Earl Goodwin's fine acres swamped, for their sole property and guardianship."

Harry stood still a little, listening sideways to the young men's talk.

"Heigho, here they are, praising the 'Beauty of Deal' again. How beautiful she looked on the regatta-day, last Monday week—on which day *I* could not come down—what a grand air she had,—any man could be proud of her. Now, she can't be a gentleman's daughter, because the men would not speak of her so. I am sure I am right, she is the daughter or sister of some coastguard. Very respectable, I dare say, and very nice to flirt with, if I could only once get sight of her."

Further on Harry went, looking at every face covered by a decent hat or bonnet, but nothing would come up to his idea of a beauty. Blue, green, red, even bright yellow ribbons, flowers, and feathers he watched and peered at, no good. Some were plain, some passable, some good looking, some pretty, some even handsome—but beauty, there was none under ribbons, flowers, or feathers. At last he gave it up in despair, and was satisfied to inhale the delicious freshness of the mild sea-breeze, as he went along the high walk towards old Sandwich Castle, where the hobgoblins now play their merry games, retreating every now and then a little, when the big ocean demands another piece of land, or when one more of those chambers, in which the Stuarts locked up refractory mortals, goes down to the bottom.

Further on still he walked, till he stood on the sand-hills, and saw the children's sand-kitchen and sand-parlour. By this time, evening had come on, and Harry, turning back, looked out on the sea, his heart swelling at the beautiful sight before him. It was calm, no wind any way, and the ships were lying in the Downs, right in a circle from west to east, their lights shining like a diadem of gems, flanked on each side by the bright ones from the lighthouses on Goodwin Sands; there, to his right, gleamed the lamp of Deal pier; and to his left, like distant *ignes-fatui*, flitted the lights of Margate town. Harry sat down on the beach. "It is very beautiful," he said to himself; "I wonder what it is in the winter? This looks like a fairy tale. I wonder why people make such a fuss about the danger of this place? I should think a Deal boatman had a wonderfully easy life." Splash, splash, came a boat with all sail spread, looking in the night air like that big, flapping, white phantom bird that troubled so sadly the brain of Coleridge's Mariner. Harry watched its smooth movements; and up rose the moon, shedding its silver light straight across to him in one broad white streak. He sat, and sat, and sat; thoughtful and glad at the beauty of earth and sky. "Walk on," he at last reminded himself, "walk on, Harry Hotspur. That great one, yonder, in Walmer Castle, may be walking up and down now in his room, revolving schemes of magnitude, getting in perspective over political obstacles, improving the old constitutional machine by some new ideas. Come, Harry, walk on, and do something better than looking after Deal beauties." And Harry did go on, back to the north-end, where the watermen and boatmen were still standing, smoking and chewing tobacco, earnestly settling various matters of nautical interest to themselves and—taking it easy. Harry's flesh and blood could stand it no longer,

so he walked up to a group: "Now, tell me, my men, here is a crown to drink mine or your own healths, if you will enlighten me, how you earn your salt, putting anything more substantial out of the question? Salt even costs money, and I cannot find how you get even that. Now, I should like to know how you do it, because I might learn something? I am afraid I shall have to work harder one day than you!" Harry held out the crown to the nearest, who stared at it, and then at him, and chuckled to himself. Two regular old "salts" came up to know what the gentleman wanted, and chuckled too; the money was still in Harry's hand, as a brawny Briton walked towards the group, heard the story, and chuckled more intensely than the others.

"Do you want to know, sur, how we Deal men live? Then look here, sur, you look a bravish heart; you *shall* know. Give me the money, and I'll treat t'others, if you'll agree to what I says. Where are you livin', sur?"

"In one the of the houses on Walmer beach."

"Well, sur, how long will you stay there?"

"I can't tell; I may go to-morrow. I may stay some time."

"Well, sur, a bargain is a bargain. I can't show you for two months what you want to know. It's the end of August now, ain't it? Well, sur, by November you be in Walmer, and I'll fetch you, and show you what you want to know." He winked his eye at the others.

"Very well, my man, here is the money; a word is a word between gentlemen. I shall be at Douro Cottage, Walmer Beach, by the first week in November. You come for me after that when you want me, and I'll be ready to learn."

"And learn you shall, sur; and you'll never forget, mind

you. My name is Joe Hart, of North-end, Deal, and I'll show you the very thing."

"He will, he will; if anybody can, he can. Thank ye, sur, thank ye," said the men, as Harry walked away.

"I suppose," thought he, "I shall see some fishing, and a little sailing about, and no end of fear; that'll be all. Stop, there is a pretty figure, now, suppose that is my beauty. I do call that a graceful walk. I must pass her on the esplanade, then I shall see." Harry hastened on—"What a precious old maid!" he murmured. "Harry Hotspur, you are a fool! Go home, and to bed."

With this acknowledgement of his mental capacity, Harry retired to Douro Cottage, and found that his old maiden aunt was up, and had a letter lying before her.

"Here you are, Mr. Harry; Edward has been in bed this hour. I wonder whether you live on air, you are the most uncongenial companion I have ever become acquainted with. When you are here I never see you; you are, ever and ever, mooning about something or other. No young man can prosper in the way you are going on. Your father has written to me that you must return home at once; he says that your preliminary studies are now finished, and he wishes to come to a decision with you, whether you will enter the civil service, or what is to become of you. You have only been here ten days, and I do not think it is right of your father to shew me so little respect. If you and your brother are to have my money when I am gone, you might as well be allowed to show me a little attention while I am in this world. Here is a ten-pound note for you, you bad boy; tell your father he may keep you, I am sure you would do no good with me. As for Edward, *I* shall keep *him* and send him to school. Your father may say what he likes, he *shall* remain with me." Harry's aunt pushed the ten pounds towards him, and nodded her head

violently, in assertion of her dignity. Harry felt that it was kind of the old lady to jerk him the note in her own abrupt fashion, and went up to her, giving her a kiss on her somewhat wrinkled cheek.

"Come, aunty, don't be cross. You know I always was of a mooning disposition, and always shall be. Will you let me come down in November?"

"In November, bless the boy! What do you want here in November?"

"I have made an appointment with some one."

"With whom? I hope not a female?"

"Oh no, aunty, a male, and a big one. I am to meet one of the Deal boatmen in November."

"Why, boy, they are the most reckless fellows on the face of the earth! What do you want with a Deal boatman?"

"To learn something from him."

"To learn something from a Deal boatman? And pray, what may that be?"

"To earn one's living easily."

"Ha, ha, ha! You'll learn something how to earn it by getting soaked through, by hair-breadth escapes, by daring feats, by watching and waiting, and ever being ready to jump in anywhere, and row off anywhere: that's what you'll learn."

"I beg your pardon, aunty, but you look at it from a lady's point of view. I don't think it is so bad, look at the fellows now bathing in the sunshine of the '*dolce far niente.*'"

"Wait a little, wait a little, Mr. Harry; but you shall come down if you wish it—a lesson may do you good. Good-night, and pleasant dreams about the Deal boatmen. I shall not be up when you go in the morning, that is the reason I waited for you to-night. Give your

mother a kiss for me, and tell your father he is a tyrant, and always was."

"Good night, aunty; many thanks for the present, and don't think so badly of me."

"I hate mooning and dawdling. I like fresh intellects and people, who know what they are about. I saw some one pass my window to-day who is a greater man than ever you will be. Look at that walk; every step tells of purpose and determination!"

"I know whom you mean—the Premier. I saw him too. I am going to try hard walking, it may clear my clouded intellect."

"Nothing ever will but a good ducking. Good night, Harry!"

Harry's aunt retired, and he, who usually would saunter on the lawn with his cigar, dreaming of everything and nothing, at once walked off to his room to prepare for the next morning's journey. I'll try it, I'll try that walking and moving system; it keeps a fellow a-going," Harry said to himself, adding: "Suppose my beauty is run away with; I do hope the young watergods won't have money enough to get married while I am gone."

Harry went to bed after he had packed his box, and lay awake some time. The moon shone full into his room, and the trees outside painted all kinds of grotesque shadows on the blind and walls. He was sure he was sitting near old Sandwich Castle and saw Julius Cæsar coming up with the Roman galleys, trying to land; and behind Harry, on the English coast, stood the robust gaunt Britons, ready to pounce upon Julius Cæsar and his legions. There now, Cæsar fell and kissed the ground, as if it were his own, and some young man rushed after him with a big flag in his hand, planting it in the soft earth, and Cæsar came up to

Harry, took him by the throat and demanded who he was, and what he was doing there: "Fishing or smuggling?" And Harry woke up with a start out of his first sleep.

"That comes from mooning," he sagely remarked. "I was thinking of Creasy's description of the landing of Cæsar, when I sat near that old castle,—I tremble all over. I have a good mind to walk to London to-morrow, to see if it will do any good." Harry fell to sleep in good earnest and woke no more till it was time to be off; but his desire to walk to London had evidently vanished by the morning, and he preferred the shrill whistle of the fiery monster.

The first week of November had come, and with it Harry Hotspur had arrived in Walmer. He had been hard at work at home to prepare for a stiff examination in the Indian service, and had been granted a week or ten days' holiday apparently to pay court to aunty, but, in reality, to keep his appointment with the boatman.

"So, for once, Mr. Harry, you remembered your promise," said his aunt, as he stood, portmanteau in hand, at the cottage door. "Well, welcome, my boy, we must not be hard upon you this time. First of all, I hear you have been working, even to satisfy that insatiable father of yours; and secondly, you know there is some great undertaking before you. I hope it won't turn out a ridiculous failure."

"Please, aunty, don't let me suffer under the lash of your smart tongue; but give me a cup of tea, and something to eat; I am famished."

Harry had scarcely sat down, when a single knock came to the door; he heard a gruff voice ask:

"Does Mr. Harry Hotspur live here, miss?"

"He is just arrived from London, do you want him?"

"He is wanted immejately—please miss. Tell him Mr. Joe Hart wants him directly."

"But he is at tea, I cannot disturb him."

"But he muss come; biseness is biseness, and he made an appointment."

By this time aunty and Harry were aware that something unusual was going on at the door, and aunty came out. When she heard the message, she called to Harry: "Harry, come here, you are wanted. Be quick! it's business."

"All right, aunty. What is it?"

"Mr. Joe Hart, of North-end, wants you this minute."

"Coming, coming; let's just have one morsel and a cup of tea. Mary, my boots and my pilot coat."

"Please, sur," called the gruff voice, "Mr. Hart says, there's no time for you to lose, if you means to come; he has sent twice for you afore."

"Business, business, my boy," said his aunt; "now take care of yourself."

Harry rushed out, having nearly scalded himself with a very hot cup of tea, and half-choking with a piece of bread and butter.

"Good-bye," was all he could get out.

The messenger, a nautical youth of about eighteen, walked off at a rash rate. The wind was beginning to blow, the rain was driven in Harry's face, and it was not over pleasant to be out.

"This is nothing!" Harry said, encouraging himself. "You'd have to stand this anywhere."

Up to the North-end in Deal they ran rather than walked; Harry every now and then casting a glance around, whether a pretty face might be seen, as Deal beauties would surely not mind the weather. He was, however, doomed to disappointment, and had to content himself with the determination, that when his adventure with the boatmen should be over, he would perseveringly try to find this celebrated beauty.

"Well, sur," said Mr. Joe Hart, as Harry approached him and some other boatmen and boys, "all ready for sea; we are going on a bit of work. I have chosen the easiest thing I could find for you. It isn't dang'rous loike; only jist to get a bit of sight of the Channel for ye and a look up the Goodins. Will ye come, sur?"

"All right, Mr. Hart, to be sure I will."

"Launch off then, men; quick," called Mr. Hart, and topple, topple, the big boat bumped down. "Jump in, sur, quick then," called out Mr. Hart, as they poured in, Harry thought head over heels in a marvellous way; the boys hanging like cats to the gunwales. Mr. Harry had certainly to be got in somewhere in a not very gentlemanly way. The sea began to heave and the wind to rise. Mr. Hart was busy spreading sail and getting all in working order.

"But what do you go out this weather for?" asked Harry, shaking the big rain drops from his face.

"Auh! that's just it, Mr. Hotspur; them there smart looking vessels wouldn't want us in fine weather. When 'tis rough loike, and they are losing their spanks and furniter, that's when they want us."

Boom, boom, boom, it went. "Do ye 'ear, boys?" called out Hart, "that's them Goodins at it again. There's somethin' up there. Let's go and see."

"But, fauther," said the nautical youth who had fetched Harry, "you ain't got the big un, this ere craft will never do it. I told ye not to come in it, only you would, because you said the young gen'leman wouldn't loike to do anything grand loike, only to have a leetle pleashur. When you're out and anything's up, then your spirit won't let you stop. I wouldn't go further, let's see about a bit, there's plenty of t'others will go."

"Hold your tongue, boy; never feared anything in my

loife, ain't going to begin now; young gen'leman needn't fear. I'll bring 'im safe home; saved hundreds moy time. Sit still, sur, please."

But Harry began to fear; rush went the sea; up went the boat; to him a fearful sight, to Mr. Hart nothing at all. He seemed decidedly the bravest of the lot, and stood there in the boat with his black locks here and there streaked with grey, his broad chest, and sinewy arms, as if he wouldn't mind having a struggle with the sea-god, Mr. Neptune, himself.

Boom, boom, boom, it went again.

"Ah, they're at it; they've got some vessel; they want's to suck her up. Wait a bit, wait a bit, my ladies and gen'lemen of Earl Goodin's court, you won't have a morsel to-day."

Hart was a romantic fellow in his way, and always would have it, "They were a livin' underneath there, for them sands got the understandin' and natur of Chris'shens."

The wind was coming on stronger, the rain splashing, the sea roaring and surging, the boat was hanging to the tops of the waves like a tin kettle, as if the next would crush it and smother it up; but Mr. Hart held on, managing so skilfully, that they escaped frem being swamped by the blustering billows. They had made a good way out, and could see the ship in distress, a small collier, evidently out of its course.

"Don't be afeard, sur," whispered the nautical youth to Harry; "some of the big uns will have heerd it, and be off by this time; fauther is a bit venturesome loike, he is known for it."

"You lave the young gen'leman alone," grumbled Hart, "he's got more courage than ye; he ain't afeard."

Who had seen Harry Hotspur at this moment would have

ventured such an assertion. He sat in the boat, vainly lamenting his ignorant rashness; his head swimming, and going round and round, his face as white as a ghost's, his limbs shaking with cold and wet, having just sufficient strength to keep up and admire the true British pluck of which he was a witness in the person of Mr. Joe Hart.

"We are nearin', we are nearin'! Keep her off, men! Steady and sure! Hoi, what's it?"

But the answer was lost in a fearful gust and a tremendous wave which swept over the boat, but from which it rose again like a cockleshell.

"You can't help us." "Want more help, stuck fast." "We want ropes. Chains, masts, anchor, all gone!" "They are coming at last, thank heaven!"

With big strokes some luggers were approaching; *they*, even, were dancing up and down, like toy-boats, but still making head against wind and sea.

"I shall jump in one of them to help," said Mr. Hart; "you, Jack, get back now; you is so afeard. Young gen'leman will have had enough this time."

The luggers came up and Hart called to them; he was always welcome, being known as the bravest man in Deal, so that the two got close, and Hart swung himself with wonderful dexterity into the bigger boat; but in doing so, jerked his own little craft, and Harry, who was losing his steadiness altogether, fell over like a leaden soldier.

"Good heavens, fauther, the young gen'leman's gone!"

"Jump in," cried Hart. "No don't, Jack; I will."

Into that surging heaving sea did Joe Hart jump, just as Harry came up, his coat having caught on a nail of the lugger; catching him by the hair, and jumping or scrambling in somehow, with strong hands and arms reaching over, was the work of a minute.

"We'll keep him here, you get home back to your mauther, and tell her I'm all right. I'm with Bill Robinson, in the 'Beauty;' then run to the lady, and tell her young gen'leman's all right; he is with me—with Joe Hart. Get off, boys, do. They'll be a frettin' at home."

There he lay in the bottom of the lugger, white and wet; but blankets, coats, rubbing, and brandy brought him to, and he was left to the tender mercy of two youngsters to scrub him right again. Presently Harry sat up, rubbed his eyes, looked round—but shut them again when he heard the wind, and saw the sea. The luggers were now busy at work; and tug, tug, tug, the collier creaked and groaned, and was got off in an incredibly short time. Joe Hart said: "They had no appetite that ere day, so they let the little morsel go." They took the poor thing in tow, to draw her to Deal beach.

"Well, young gen'leman, you seed a little. What do you think now?"

"That I was a fool, and that you are a brave man, Mr. Hart," said Harry, very faintly.

"That's roight, Mr. Hotspur; let folks but own their wrong, they can't do more any'ow."

"What did you mean, Mr. Hart, when you told your son you were in the 'Beauty'?"

"Whoy, young gen'leman, the 'Beauty of Deal,' the finest lugger goin'. Here she is, you're in her, an' she has just been savin' your loife."

Harry had been cured of two delusions. He found that the "Beauty of Deal," was the finest lugger, and no pretty damsel; and he had learned by sad experience, that Deal boatmen have no easy life of it, but that the ever recurring danger of their course, wants, perhaps, a total rest at times. When they had landed, Harry found his old aunt and his

brother Edward on the beach, in great anxiety about him; since the storm had risen after he started. Henry had to be assisted home, and Mr. Hart was requested to call as soon as he could change his wet attire. In a few sentences aunty was told what had been up, while Harry, in fresh warm clothes, lay very pale on the couch before the fire.

"Well, young gen'leman, how did you loike it?" said Hart, when he was asked to enter the room. "Ah, but you had a near spell never to see your mother's face again. Don't look downhearted, the 'Beauty' saved you, that hook of hers caught you in roight time."

"Mr. Joe Hart," said the aunt, advancing with her peculiar brisk dignity, "he ought not to have gone, it was his own fault. You are a brave man—here are ten sovereigns for you."

"Oh no, ma'am, it's too much."

"No, no. You go and divide it with your son and the others; and if I were you, I would not take young foolhardy gentlemen out again."

"Niver, niver; it gave even me a shakin' loike, when I saw him go under. Thank you, ma'am, I'll come and take him a good row, and show him them creeturs yonder when 'tis fine. I ought not to have troid to frighten him, it was wrong of me."

Harry held out his hand to Mr. Hart; neither spoke another word.

The blood had come back to his young cheeks the next morning, and he gave his aunt a fine account of the whole adventure. Aunty was wonderfully smooth and gentle this morning. When she had heard all, she began: "I think, Harry, I have wronged you in my mind, and I want to make it up. I shall add to-day a codicil to my will, and put you down for another thousand. There is something in you, you are not without your good points. You ought to have

drawn back yesterday, and I ought to have made you, instead of encouraging you to go."

"Aunty," whispered Harry, "don't give me the money, I shan't want it. I shall get some good appointment if I work. Give it to them—to the seamen, their wives, widows, orphans, or to the Life Boat—I never shall forget that day! The first money I lay by in after years shall be for them."

Aunty kissed him, a very rare thing; old aunty's kisses were precious and meant something; and that day she wrote to her brother, Harry's father, the tyrant as she called him, a thing she had not done for years and years.

The sight of true danger softens many a heart. The "Beauty," lay next day in the sunshine, clean and orderly, smiling and blinking in the sun on the smooth beach at the North-end, coquetting with every stranger that went by, that they might praise her, as the bravest little vessel in Deal.

A TRUE STORY AND A SAD ONE.

THE river Main was frozen over—skating had commenced. The wealthy people of Frankfort were on the ice; many ladies were in light sledges, pushed on by gentlemen skaters; many in pretty skating dresses were trying their own skill against the other sex, and generally coming off victors. One charming girl, blooming like a fresh rose, in dark green velvet and fur, a cap of the same materials on her curly head, was enticing an elderly gentleman to come and have a slide with her; but he very wisely refused, saying he had quite enough to do to keep himself in a steady position with his enormous stick. There is no place so nice for flirting as a skating ground; the free movements of the young folks send the blood bounding through the veins and tinge everything around with the bright colour of health and happiness. Our young lady seemed evidently to think so; she paid, however, no attention to the compliments of the young men, preferring to devote herself to her elderly companion. These two seemed great friends, they had come together, and they went together; as the young girl turned into one of the best streets, she shook her finger at her companion.

"Now, Mr. Holberg, remember; we expect you to-night. I shall open the ball with you, and if you are not punctual, I shall come after you! Good-bye, good-bye; mind you are punctual. I shall never be eighteen again!" And so off she tripped, ascending the steps of a large house, he looking after her, and nodding once more as she turned round at the top.

Elena Schnelling stood some hours later before her cheval-glass, casting a glance at the figure before her. She thought that that figure looked pretty, perhaps more than pretty; she thought how happy she was; how favoured to have all her wishes granted, and how ungrateful she would be if she did not try to return such wealth of love as was bestowed on her, by an equal measure. She looked again at the figure: yes, it was pretty, the wreath of lilies of the valley was graceful, her bouquet exquisite, her white dress in perfect good taste—somebody came behind her, gave her a kiss, and tied something round her neck. "My darling mamma," whispered Elena, kissing that gentle mother's hand. "It is not from me, Elena," answered mamma. "Your papa sends it before you come down. My present lies there." Elena opened the morocco case, and her mother's miniature looked at her with the same loving eyes, with which she herself regarded her now!

"Mamma dear, I am so happy; I feel so supremely happy, to-night! Will it ever last?"

"My darling, should it not, you must have strength to bear it. But come, we will to-night not have the slightest shadow on our child's countenance. Come with me; I believe some people have arrived already."

What will not wealth do? The snow was lying deep outside, the icicles hung from the house-roofs; the cold wind whistled through the streets; but in Councillor Schnelling's

house the very tropics appeared to have spread their vegetation. Large-leaved plants filled the recesses as background, while pretty white, red, yellow, and pink flowers stood in front: the mirror threw them back and doubled them.

"How beautifully you have arranged the house, mamma," said Elena, as they were entering the ante-room. "I wish I could shut my eyes and think it would always, always be so. Mamma dear, I am afraid I am a great moral coward."

"What strange thoughts for you to have to-night, child."

"I cannot help it, they *will* come. I feel so happy, it almost overburdens me."

"Hush, Elena, here comes your father. He hates forebodings and omens, and all such things. You know he likes plain good sense."

Councillor Schnelling was not an amiable man; but he unbent at home, rather overdoing it with presents and indulgences of all kinds. That injudicious gratifications might unstring the nerves never entered his head. Like a true merchant, he liked to show his wealth in his house, and in his family.

Mr. Holberg did come punctually, and led off the Polonaise, or introductory dance, with Elena. She had insisted on this old-fashioned ceremony.

"Look at the old beau leading off Elena," said Madame Rishel to her crony Mrs. Councillor von Raben. "I should not be astonished if they allowed her to marry him. The girl seems quite infatuated with him."

Mrs. Councillor von Raben thought it was a disgrace, when so many eligible young men were there.

Elena cared little what any one thought or said. She had been so much petted and caressed at home, that home satisfied as yet all her heart's cravings. Mr. Holberg was a part of that home, being her father's best friend, and a daily visitor at the house.

"Elena," said Mr. Holberg, as he led her back to her mother, "I have something to give you to-day. It is a talisman, which I have had in sacred keeping many a year. It was my wife's present in our young and happy days, and I want to see it shine on your little hand. Mrs. Schnelling," he said, turning to the mother, "may I give Elena this diamond ring for her birthday, with the injunction to wear it always—morning, noon, and night?"

"My dear Mr. Holberg, I know that ring, it is almost too valuable. I have heard of its worth. Your wife took a whole inheritance, for which she did not care, and bought that ring, the second year you were married. I am afraid of it, Mr. Holberg."

"Now, mamma, *you* have fancies and forebodings; look at it," for the ring was already on Elena's finger. "How it sparkles and glitters, and—I do declare it looks at me, and speaks."

"Foolish Elena, I suppose I must say 'Yes.'"

Elena's big blue eyes rested for a moment on Mr. Holberg's face. She took his hand, pressed it gently, and said: "I understand, it shall be my monitor."

"Ah," returned Mr. Holberg, with a deep sigh, "wife and children are all gone. If I had not this house, I should have nothing to love. My brother loves only his money-bags, and has no other interest in the world."

"Elena seems quite absorbed by that ancient admirer of hers," said one pretty, pert, and very rich merchant's daughter to another. "Surely she has money enough herself, and need not court him for that."

But if there was any scandal in the attention Elena paid to Mr. Holberg, it soon subsided. Mr. Holberg having fulfilled his functions as leader-off of the ball, retired to Mrs. Schnelling's side, where he could watch Elena, and talk about her to his heart's content. In German circles the

lady of the house has not the onerous duty to introduce every one to every one else; it is understood that people invited to one and the same private house may freely dance with and talk to each other.

"I hope nothing will ever harm that child of ours," said Mr. Holberg to Elena's mother, as if he had a part property in her daughter.

"May your wish be granted," answered the mother.

"I leave to-morrow for a long time, Mrs. Schnelling, take care of her while I am gone. I shall look after her myself when I come back. I wish she could go with me. I go to the East about some loan, how delighted she would be."

"People would talk, Mr. Holberg."

"I don't see why they should. I am more than old enough to be her father. My own daughter would have been older than Elena."

"Scandal does not look at the right side of things, it likes the wrong side."

"I suppose I must not think of it. I shall say good-bye to you all to-night. My brother will, I know, engross me to-morrow with instructions of one kind or another."

Elena fluttered about like a butterfly from one flatterer to another, laughing and merry, no serious feeling entering her light heart, that did not yet beat faster at the word "love."

The ball was waning, and Elena began to think all happy times do come to an end. Mr. Holberg came up to her to say "Good-bye." "It will be for a very long time, Elena," he said. "I am going away to-morrow, to the East."

"Oh, I am so sorry, I am so sorry; how I wish I could go with you."

"So do I; but your mamma says she could not think of it."

"Mr. Holberg, don't forget me," Elena said earnestly. "I want some one to take care of me; I am afraid they pet and spoil me too much." And Elena hung down her head.

Her eyes actually glistened with bright tears when she lifted them again to his face, and added: "Look here, it shall be my monitor," holding the ring up to him.

"God bless you, my dear, dear child! I shall think of you every day, and bring home something to show you. Farewell!"

Mr. Holberg was gone. Elena had waived an adieu to him, as he rapidly passed the house in his carriage, the next day.

Mrs. Schnelling had complained a little; but illness had for years been a stranger to the house, and Elena could scarcely believe it, when her mother actually remained in bed, and she was told a few days later by the medical man that her mother was in great danger. Elena began now to return a little of that love and attention that had been given her so largely. Her father, too, had become nervous and irritable; looking grave and abstracted. All at once Elena seemed to have plenty to do, in order to fulfil her duties. She had never been accustomed to an unkind word from her father, and now—the first sharp sentence cut her to the quick; she winced under it, and thought it cruel. She looked on her diamond, it sparkled brighter than ever—her monitor. Up she rushed to her father: "You did not mean it, papa? I know you did not."

"What, my child?" said the unconscious Mr. Schnelling, who had, like all men, vented his inward irritation on the next being he met, and was not even aware that he had done anything wrong.

Elena's mother was for some days near death's door, and for weeks not able to leave her room. All the life and

gaiety seemed to have vanished from the house, and Mr. Schnelling had become morose and sombre.

Scarcely had his wife recovered, and regained a little strength, when, one after the other, failures were announced from several places. Mr. Schnelling had mixed himself up with undertakings of young men inexperienced in heavy money-matters; had listened to their flatteries to lend them his name, and was now reaping the fruits of his rashness.

One evening he locked himself in his room, and would see no one. On the next morning he came out very haggard and pale, went to his wife's room, called Elena, and told both—that they were beggars. He had inherited an honourable name from his father, and was determined to let no blot rest on it. He should, therefore, sacrifice all to the last farthing to meet his engagements. It was of no use now to go to his friends, and ask assistance—things had gone too far; he must retire into private life.

All, all went: money, houses, gardens, furniture, jewellery, plate, even books; no one asked Elena for her ring—she would not have sacrificed it if they had. Morning and night she looked at it to gain courage for her trials, intending to return it to Mr. Holberg, when he came back. It was wrong, she thought, to retain it, in her new position.

They retired into a little house on the outskirts of the town. Mr. Schnelling gloomy, his wife in weakened health, Elena doing what she could to lighten their cares—cheerful, and apparently contented. Their former friends did not offer to call on them, they were afraid Mr. Schnelling would show them the door, so much his proud temper was feared.

One evening Elena was watering the first flowers of spring, in her little front garden, when a quiet step came up the walk; she turned round, Mr. Holberg stood there.

"My child," he said, "I have come back, and find that

great sorrow has come to you while I was away. Why heard I nothing?"

"Papa would not write, and I was afraid of your brother. Oh, Mr. Holberg!" He had hold of her hand, and for the first time since her mother's heavy illness, Elena wept.

"Come in, come in, Elena. I cannot see your tears."

Both entered the house. Mr. Schnelling received Mr. Holberg with the friendliness due to old and tried ties, and the wife looked at him with tears in her eyes.

"My dear, dear friends, why was I not told? I heard nothing, but the rumour of some failures, till I returned last night."

"It was no use, Holberg," said Mr. Schnelling; "your brother kept it from you on purpose."

"Hem! let us have a cup of tea together." He was their first guest in their new abode, and something like old sunshine and old happiness seemed to hover round the little company at the tea-table, over which Elena presided.

Mr. Holberg sat a long long time with them. "I cannot go," he said, at last, "I cannot leave you thus; I must see you back in something of your old position, and I do not know how to do it. My affairs are so tied up with my brother's, that I am really afraid, should I name Elena my sole heiress, he would never agree. He is younger than I am, and, I suppose, reckons on my death; and then, there is all this time—what can I do, what can I do? I could not sit down contentedly to know you in so much lower a position." He walked about from one end of the room to the other, and thought, and thought. At last, he stood still right before his favourite.

"Elena, will you and your parents trust me? To enable me to do anything for you, you must yourself bring a great sacrifice; you must become my wife; then your parents can

come and live with us, and my brother *must* submit to my arrangements, if I provide for you suitably." Holberg took Elena's hand: "Do you trust the honest friendship and love that makes you this offer?"

Mr. and Mrs. Schnelling did not interfere, and Elena looked on her ring, looked up into that kindly, candid face; her heart was as free as a bird's, she knew no other love than that of her parents and her dear friend—and she said "Yes," with as bright a smile, as if a handsome young man in the pride of youth had stood there. Perhaps, the smile was too bright, as it showed that Elena's soul was still slumbering.

The world talked, the world will talk; it changed not Mr. Holberg's intentions. His brother stormed and sneered; Holberg reminded him, that it was *he* who had founded the firm.

Elena was Mrs. Holberg, mistress of a magnificent house; her father and mother were residing with her, and men began again to look upon Mr. Schnelling as somebody, since Holberg drew him into the affairs of his own firm. Bright and gay as ever, Elena was the happy genius of the house; every one bathing in the light of her joyous temperament. Mr. Holberg took the old dignified place of her dearest, dearest friend, and it appeared really no anomaly to see that young creature hanging on the arm of her elderly husband. Two years had run on, two years of unalloyed happiness; the ring sparkled more intensely, morning and night.

It was the third anniversary of their wedding-day; such a sunny day in early June. Mr. and Mrs. Holberg had given many invitations for a garden party, and no end of amusements were to be arranged. The young clergyman, who had lately come to the parish, was invited. People began

to talk about him, as a new light, an earnest fiery preacher, who would do some good; people did not say which way the good was to be, whether for society in general, or for them in particular.

The beautiful house, the lovely garden, the fine company, the well-furnished tables, and delicate wines, all made the spirits of those present rise, and enjoy the genial influence of the good things of this earth. At table, the young clergyman proposed the health of Mr. and Mrs. Holberg, and when Elena raised up her head to thank him, a big pair of dark brown eyes were looking straight into her own. She cast down hers, and raised them not again to those others. Elena was not quite so joyous that day; she was a little abstracted—those eyes haunted her wherever she went. She would continually go back to Mr. Holberg, and pat him, or touch him, or even press his hand, as if she thought she had better stop near him. At last he noticed it, and said, tenderly: "What is it, child, have you lost anything?" The grave men, with whom he was talking politics, looked at her. Elena felt almost ashamed, and did not come again. Evening came; variegated lamps threw a dreamy light over the garden walks, intensifying the shade. The guests were pleased, were happy, and drained the cup of pleasure to their hearts' content. One heart was not content, it was Elena's, when she did not like to go back to Mr. Holberg; she felt continually for the ring, or she sat down by her mother, till some restlessness drove her off again. At last she fairly wandered away, wandered into one of the secluded walks, and sat down on a bench, to listen to the distant music. It had ceased; she heard the confused voices of her guests, the merry laughter of the girls, the joyous talk of the gentlemen, and she drew back still more. Those eyes were there again. She began

to think—would, or could, there ever come a change over her? Would she ever keep one thought even from Mr. Holberg, her dear, dear friend and husband? No, never, it should never be! Elena knelt down, there and then, and prayed; prayed earnestly that God might keep temptation out of her soul. A solemn "Amen," pronounced by a deep melodious voice behind her startled her. She rose up, and met the young clergyman face to face. She could not have spoken a word. He took her hand, adding, "You have prayed for me, too; let us keep out of temptation." He said no more, but led her back to the company, and passed the rest of the evening in conversation with her, Mr. Holberg, and her parents, who had drawn into a circle, as the company began to become thinner and thinner.

Who spoke not of that sermon next Sunday? The preacher had taken the simple text, "Lead us not into temptation," and it appeared as if his very soul soared up into higher realms to bring down the power that would screen him and other mortals from sin and temptation. Elena heard that solemn appeal, and was very subdued all day; aye, even more tender than usual to her husband. Mr. Holberg had taken a remarkable interest in the young preacher, who was decidedly a man of unusual natural capacity, and very cultivated intellect. It was impossible to be in his society without feeling its superior charm, and to a sensitive generous mind, like Mr. Holberg's, nothing in the world gives greater happiness than the companionship of a kindred spirit. He would naturally invite him, ask him to call on Elena, who was often alone, when he was obliged to attend to business matters; and never wearied in his praise. After some time, however, it was no use to invite the clergyman, he always had an excuse, and evidently avoided the house. His sermons, people said, began to flag; he looked ill and dispirited. If *then*, some friend could have

told him that the temptation was too strong for him, that he *must* go away and avoid it! But his proud heart would battle it out, would think itself strong enough to look again and again into those bright blue eyes, always remembering that they shone not for him.

It is so sad to speak of sin and sorrow—but sin and sorrow will come and drop their poison, where they find earthly happiness. Sin and sorrow came to that household in Frankfort. One Sunday morning no preacher ascended that pulpit, no pretty young wife patted her loving, tender-hearted husband's hand, no gentle daughter said brightly, "Good-morning," to her parents—the young clergyman and Elena were gone.

Mr. Holberg tried all in his power to find them. He would forgive them, he said, if he knew only how Elena was, whether she was happy. He knew she had the same tender friendship for him, and it was wrong to ask anything else of one so young, so inexperienced. It wrung his soul to hear the disparaging remarks, to see the pitying glances of his acquaintance. He had done the wrong, he would say, not she; he ought to have known it, to have guarded her, shielded her from it, and he had thrown her into the very temptation she would have avoided. Elena's parents bore it better than he did. Mr. Holberg died a few months after, people said of a broken heart, leaving his wife, Elena Holberg, sole heiress of his wealth, subject to a handsome allowance for her parents during their lifetime.

Years after the disappearance of Elena and the young clergyman, a Frankfort merchant was going to Russia. He had been an intimate friend of the Holbergs in his young days, and had never given up the idea to see once again the sweet face that had made so many happy. He had come to a Russian frontier town, where some heavy duty had to be

paid, and the superior official being absent, no one could understand him sufficiently for the settlement of his affairs. A Russian took him into the town, to a house, where he explained some one lived, that could speak German well. When the merchant had been admitted, a lady in deep mourning met him, and asked, in German, what he required.

"I have come," he said, "to ask your husband, madam, who, I believe, is a teacher at the public school, to interpret for me at the customs and passport office. The superior officer is gone away for two days, and I cannot make myself perfectly understood to the others." He stopped short, looked at the lady's hand, again at her face, and exclaimed: "Elena Holberg, I am convinced it is you. I know that ring!"

"It is, Mr. Feldmann, I knew you directly, but should not have spoken first. How is—how is Mr. Holberg? How are my parents?"

"All dead, Elena. Mr. Holberg died soon after you went away. I believe from grief that he did not know where and how you were. He would have forgiven you, he said, it was his fault more than yours; but he could not bear to think that you were in want, or unhappy. Your parents lived in comfort for some years, and died close after each other. Mr. Holberg left you his whole fortune, which is at home intact. But why are you in mourning?"

"Oh, Mr. Feldmann, God has punished me fearfully. Oh, what great, great sorrow have I suffered, the last six months. My daughter, my only child, my daughter, sleeps in the graveyard."

"And how did she come by her death?"

Tears chased each other down Elena's cheeks. Mr. Feldmann tried to quiet her, and begged of her to ease her mind, and tell him her daughter's melancholy fate.

"We went away from home in our first mad passion, as far as possible, and came here, where my husband found immediately, an appointment as teacher in the school. We were contented with our very moderate means, though ever and ever regretting those dear ones at home. One daughter was given us. Ah, so beautiful, so very beautiful, that I ought to have known her beauty would have been her ruin. A young Russian nobleman, the son of a very high Russian family, some miles distant from here, came to receive his instruction in German and French from my husband. It is now about eighteen months since he came first. 'Lena, as we called her was then just sixteen years old, but tall and graceful as a willow. Her father had taken great pains with her education, thinking she might one day be in a better position than her parents. The young Russian fell desperately in love with her when he saw her, some months after his first visit. He declared his passion in a very short time, and told us determinedly, that he would not be refused by us or anyone if 'Lena could but love him. He was so impassioned, so impetuous, that we, remembering our own trials, gave way and allowed his visits. 'Lena, sweet girl, clung to that fiery spirit of his, and the two were indeed lovers. It was not necessary for us to remind him that his parents' consent must be given; he said his own happiness was at stake and he should insist on it. He was sure to obtain it when they saw 'Lena, and would not refuse him, as he was the only son. But they did refuse, they sneered at such a marriage; and when he at last begged to be allowed to bring 'Lena to see them, they told him he might do so, but it would alter nothing. All this was kept from us. One day he drove up in his mother's carriage to fetch 'Lena to see her. Ah, sweet she looked, as she left me, with her father's consent. 'Who could refuse *her?*' her lover said tenderly.

"'Lena returned in the evening, accompanied by the Countess's own maid, as they had not thought it right to let the young people return alone so late. My darling could not sufficiently praise the kindness with which she had been received, and the attention shown to her. The Countess had told her, that we should shortly have a visit from her. Suddenly 'Lena turned very white, and complained of pain. We thought at first it was fatigue and excitement; but she became worse in the night. We sent for a doctor, he came to see her die, and pronounced it at once as a case of poisoning. We were mad with grief. We could do nothing. In the middle of the day her lover came in, found 'Lena dead, heard what the doctor had said, and rushed home to blow his brains out in the presence of his mother. Oh God, oh God! the agony of that time, when I think of it again. What could we do? Our child was gone, they were punished, and we poor foreigners could have done little against Russian nobles. The Count and Countess left the estate and travelled. They are still away, and may never return here again. We buried our darling, and have one consolation left—to visit her grave."

The clergyman arrived by that time; a grave man, with white hair, whom no one would easily have recognised as that young enthusiastic man of former years. His manner to Elena showed that he had still the same affection for her, which, in its first fiery stage, made them err. Mr. Feldmann could not persuade them to return to Frankfort.

That evening they went to a German clergyman some miles distant, who united them in wedlock, having known their whole story some time ago. Mr. Feldmann aided Elena to recover her inheritance, so that they lived in comfort; but nothing could persuade them to leave the little Russian town, where their child lay buried.

AUNT BECKY.

MY earliest reminiscences are of strange dark faces—of flashing dark eyes—of white turbans—of glistening ornaments—of wavy drapery—of a sky that seemed eternally blue—of great heat—of a tall fair lady, in whose arms I nestled, and a bearded man, with helmet and sword, who would often pat my cheeks, and kiss me. Then I remember that I missed the man with helmet and sword, that the fair lady's face looked pale and anxious, and that she wept much.

Far, far back, in the distance of time and memory, one morning is still vividly impressed upon me, when lying in my little cot by the side of her, I had already learned to call mother. I awoke early. All was very still. Soon after I must again have fallen asleep, for I was awakened by strange noises, and by seeing the room full of black forms—men dressed something like the man with helmet and sword. How I screamed when one fellow struck poor mamma, took me by the hair—ah! I can remember no more.

My next impressions are of the sea, of a tall dark woman,

who held me up in her arms, that I might look at the pretty water, as it danced and glistened in the sun.—Then again I am at fault.

In the county of Suffolk, not far from the town of Ipswich, there stands a fine old Elizabethan mansion, that seems to have defied alike the ravages of time and weather. It lies in a dell, formed by sloping hills, that are clothed with luxuriant foliage, through which, here and there, peeps a bare spot of fresh greensward. Immense yew trees rise here in all their majesty; the gnarled oak, with its roots all twisted and bare, marks the winding paths, that lead to the heights above ; a rustling streamlet seeks its glistening course through the dell, past the house, and further on, by the side of the old village churchyard, refreshing many a pleasant nook, till it is lost in the placid waters of the Orwell. Nature seems to have exhausted all the treasures of a moderate clime in enriching this little place—to have surpassed herself in the changing tints, in the smiling fields, in the ever-varying contrast of hill and dale.

The traveller on the high road that leads close by, just catches a glimpse of the turrets and chimneys of the old mansion, as they rise above the trees that surround it so thickly. If he comes nearer, he will see the creeping ivy that covers it on two sides, throwing the red brick, of which it is built, into bold relief, and affording a resting-place for perfect multitudes of little birds, whose sweet and happy notes find many a re-echo in the woods. The main entrance, which leads into the hall, is guarded by two quaint old figures in stone, that are supposed to represent the ancestors of the Pierrepoint family, in full armour,

though, from the loss of certain important features, they are no longer recognisable. There is something remarkable even in the old oaken door, that still retains the cumbersome lock, huge chains, and numerous bolts, by which it was made fast in times long gone bye. It seems to have been a peculiarity with the Pierrepoints to have left things much as they were when first made.

The hall was furnished with an oaken panelling, that was beautifully carved, and afforded pleasure to many a travelling antiquarian and sightseer. At the north-end was a huge fire-place, deeply imbedded in the wall, and surrounded with ironwork of most ancient fashion. A gallery ran half round the spacious place, terminating in an enclosed platform, where the musicians, in olden times, were wont to play while dinner was served below. Three windows of stained glass afforded light, and through them a subdued chaste glow was shed over the ancient furniture and the portraits of the Pierrepoint family. Perhaps the other remarkable feature of the mansion was the chapel, situated in the left wing. It was not in good preservation, yet enough of bygone splendour remained to show that the founder had spared neither time nor trouble to make his little house of prayer a point of envy to the surrounding gentry.

Before the house lay the park, studded with many a noble oak and elm, beneath whose mighty branches sheep and cattle browsed. A garden in the Italian style, with shady walks and avenues, was laid out at the back. In this garden, on a large piece of ornamental water, swans disported themselves.

Of this ancient place, an old maid was the mistress, known far and wide as "Miss Becky," or as some of the more frivolous would call her, "Old Beck." This good lady,

whose real name was Miss Rebecca Pierrepoint, farmed the property herself, and well indeed did she manage her people; from gardener to ploughboy, all feared, yet respected Miss Becky. Had anything gone wrong in the poultry yard, the unlucky wight who had the poultry in charge trembled, for Miss Becky was sure to find it out; were the horses ill attended to, the "horsemen" shook, for Miss Becky was sure to notice it; were the fields scamped, and the ploughmen lazy, Miss Becky would be watching behind a hedge. She was everywhere directing, and scolding, and exhorting, and with success too,—few farmers in the vicinity had such crops, such sheep, such horses, and cattle.

Yet Aunt Becky could be gentle too. Many were the cottagers in the cosy hamlet that lay about three-quarters of a mile from the hall, that knew Miss Becky as a friend when sickness or trouble visited their little homes. Illness or affliction was a sure passport to Miss Becky's heart and purse. She could sing an ailing child to sleep; she could make up a quarrel between two men by dint of tongue; she could bring a drunkard to his senses; and make a thriftless wife careful.

So Aunt Becky ruled at Pierrepoint despotically, yet justly. No clergyman or churchwarden had as yet had courage to interfere, save with the mildest suggestions, in the management of the parish schools, of which she was head patron.

She treated all she had to do with as erring children, whom it was her duty to set right; and as every one knew her good heart, and her kindly nature, her position was not disputed.

One fine evening, towards the end of the month of June, in the year 185–, when all England was still in mourning, stricken to the dust by the fearful tidings that had come from the East, concerning the Indian mutiny, a carriage drove up to the gate of the hall. From it there descended an Indian nurse leading a little girl. They were shown, by the man servant, who opened the door, into the library, where sat Aunt Becky. The old lady looked very tall and very straight: her hair quite grey, was partially hidden by a neat cap; her features, though a little sharp, were decidedly prepossessing, and her complexion was still fresh and clear. She wore her habitual plain silk dress, with no ornament whatever, save a large chain, to which was attached a still larger watch, averred to be as punctual and correct as its owner. When the nurse and the little child were shown in, Aunt Becky was seated at the table, making up some of her accounts, and was engaged at the same time in lecturing a little diminutive boy, who sat perched up on a high stool in the corner, a huge pinafore tied to his neck, and a book in his hand.

As the nurse entered, leading her charge, Aunt Becky was speaking to the little boy, "Harry,—four and two are six, and three are nine—do you hear?—ten and twenty-one are thirty-one—Harry, drat the boy!—" Here her calculations and remonstrances were interrupted, and she looked up somewhat astonished at the pair that now stood before her. The little girl had, in her shyness, kept almost entirely out of reach, behind the ample skirts of her protectress, yet the sight of her childlike face seemed to awaken strange memories within Aunt Becky's breast, for she started visibly, then, turning to the nurse, she asked her what she wanted. The Indian vouchsafed no reply, but simply presented a letter to her. Aunt Becky took it, opened it,

and as she read, hot tears chased quietly down her aged cheeks. When she had finished, she laid the letter down, and going up to the little girl, took her into her arms, kissed her, and stroked her head, murmuring. "Thy will be done." Soothed by the caress, the child looked up into the old lady's face, and taking confidence, she threw her little arms round Aunt Becky's neck, and returned the kiss. Aunt Becky was for some time so deeply affected that she could not speak; but, mastering her emotion, she placed the little one on her knee, and held long converse with the old nurse, who spoke English very well. From that day forth nurse and child became inmates of the hall.

It is from this point that all clear recollection of my early history begins. From the time when my nurse brought me to Pierrepoint Hall—I suppose I must have been about six years old then. Before that time my life had been a confused dream, varied by some incidents, however, that were so stirring that they can never be effaced from my memory. They, however, vanished into the background before the new life at the Hall; it was pleasant and happy enough, for Aunt Becky, though strict, was never stern. My nurse had died soon after she had brought me to England, and with her all other knowledge of my life passed away, but that I was Aunt Becky's niece, and that she was my future protectress.

Harry, Aunt Becky's nephew—left to her as the child of an only brother, who had disappeared mysteriously—and I became fast friends. He was good-natured, and I was petulant. I was in grief over all sorts of lessons that aunty, in spite of all her other occupations, insisted on giving us both, and he took the blame. I thanked him by giving him

innumerable pinches and kicks on the sly, all of which he bore meekly, as coming from a young lady whom he, in his childish way, much adored. We took good care that none of our by-play should be noticed by Aunt Becky, and she was generally so much occupied descanting on our imperfections and stupidity, and trying to unite arithmetic, catechism, English history, and grammar, with the casting up of her farming accounts and the writing of her business letters, that we went scot free.

"Nelly, you are stupid," she would say to me, "but I think Harry is stupider still. Do you hear, sir? I have asked you twice, when did William the Conqueror come to England?—Williams shall not be so extravagant in his orders for the horses, I am determined—Pray, what are you doing under the table Harry?" as poor Harry was rubbing his shins from my repeated kicks—"Nelly, have you at last finished that sum?—It is unbearable, the extravagance of those servants—Harry, Harry, Harry, will you sit upright this minute, and give me an answer?" On went Aunt Becky, with a volley of denunciations against us, in the midst of which the Rector of the parish was announced, and we were able to escape.

Oh, what delight it was to roam about the dear old place, —to climb up the trees, as we did both of us, like little monkeys—tearing our clothes in preparation for the next scolding—to chase up and down the hills at the back of the house—to feed the swans on the pond, as I called it; or on the lake, as Harry called the ornamental water—to lie in the park, under the yew trees—to be here and there and everywhere, and revel on with childish mirth, in the joy to have the run of such a jolly, jolly place. When quite exhausted with glee we would generally finish up by taking off our boots and socks and paddle in the clear water of the

glistening brook, and then, conscious that we had been as wild as we could well be, we began to smooth ourselves down, ready to go back to the house and meet Aunt Becky with as demure a countenance as we could. When we returned to the library we heard Aunty at high words with the Rector, about church and school matters. I nudged Harry, suggesting that we might as well be off again, but my steadier playmate shook his head, in sign that we had had enough, and going up to the library table sat down to his slate till Aunty should notice him. I was bolder, standing behind Aunt Becky's chair, and listening attentively to the controversy.

"My dear sir, what is the use of arguing any more about it. You are a very good man, so good that you will not see the dreadful wickedness of your congregation, myself included. You must tell us the truth in stronger words from the pulpit—indeed you must. Tell us that there is only one place for the sinner, and that we are all sinners."

The Rector smiled increduously. "My dear Miss Pierrepoint, I have the highest estimation of your good sense, but that would not help me, I should lose my congregation."

"No you would not, you would get them all to come, while many now leave us and go to the Wesleyan Chapel. Thunder away, sir, thunder away; tell them the truth. People like to feel shaken, and miserable, and downcast, and like to come out of church and find that it is not quite so bad yet, that there is some respite still, and that they may meanwhile enjoy the good things of this world. I think all clergymen ought to have been a little wicked some part of their lives, that they might know more of real human wickedness and be better able to tell the nature of it. You ought to feel as wicked as I do sometimes. Ah, sir, could I not preach? Put me up there, I would tell my hearers something that would wake them out of their sleep."

"*You* wicked, Miss Rebecca? Why you labour from morning to night to do more than others!"

"Well, well, you do not know anything about it; how should you? I do believe you are the only thoroughly good man I ever met. God bless you and your preaching—go on in your own way. *He* will prosper it; and, perhaps, some day you will even be able to soften my stubborn old heart! This full hour have we been quarrelling, while these children have been romping about; and you, my dear sir, have taken no refreshment."

The good Rector refused not the home-brewed ale and crisp cakes, his favourite lunch, and soon after, the former combatants were deeply engaged in the workings of the clothing club, and the mothers' society, and the Sunday school, and a hundred other good deeds connected with the church in our parish.

The reverend gentleman was gone, and I thought Aunty returned a little irritated when she had escorted him to the entrance hall. She resumed her seat to finish our lessons, but, on turning suddenly round, found me behind her chair making grimaces at Master Harry. Her momentary anger seemed uncontrollable, she gave me a smart slap on my face, with the words: "Is that the way in which you return my anxiety and my care for you, you little minx?"

I stood there, swelling with mortification, my face as red as fire. Master Harry, always much more gentle than myself, however, jumped up from his chair, came right up to Aunty, and taking my part like a *preux chevalier*, exclaimed: "You ought not to have struck Nelly, Aunt Becky, and I shall not allow it. If you do it again, I shall help her and strike *you!*" threatening Aunty with his little fists. Aunty Becky looked up aghast from one to the other; before, however, she could speak, Harry took

my hand, and said: "Come, Nelly, we had better leave such a cross Aunt. We are orphans, both of us; and if she won't keep us, we can but die together." So we stalked out of the room like two real heroes. Aunty, perfectly petrified, sat in her chair, as she seemed almost unable to comprehend the scene. We walked out of the house into the park, and Harry, two years my senior, and the leader in this affair, led me on and on in the hot August noon-day sun, till we came into the shadiest and remotest part of the park; exhausted from our former exercise, and beginning to feel the need of our early dinner, we both sat down under a tremendous oak, and began to look at our position.

"Let us die here, Nelly," said Harry. "I am sure I love you dearly, and would rather die with you than live with any one else, Don't you love me a little?"

"Oh yes, Harry, you are my only friend; but I am so hungry, and it is so very miserable." And I broke out into loud lamentations and tears.

Harry wiped away my tears, and soothed me as well as he could; then he took off his jacket, gathered some leaves, stuffed the jacket with them and made a pillow for me. "Now, Nelly," he said, "you go to sleep, and I will watch by you till I too shall fall asleep. Then we shall both die in our sleep, and when Aunty is sorry and will look for us, she will find us no more. Say your prayers for the last time, Nelly dear, and then give me a kiss." I obeyed his injunctions, and what with hunger, fatigue, and exhausted feelings, was soon asleep. Harry told me afterwards that he soon followed my example. Neither of us awoke till we heard voices near us, felt ourselves shaken, and on opening our eyes found it had become quite dusk, and that three or four people were near us.

"You naughty children," we heard our maid say; "how could you run away from dinner and hide here? Miss Becky is quite ill, and has been looking for you everywhere. I have never seen her in such a state all the years I have lived with her; I do believe she has been crying about you." But Martha became kinder when she found we were so faint that we could scarcely walk; so she told one of the men she had brought with her to take Harry up in his arms, and taking me up herself, as I was slight and slim, we were carried through the park and up to the house, just as Aunty was again emerging from it with other servants in search of us.

We both expected sharp words from her, but were disappointed. Aunt Becky came up, gave us each a kiss, and said: "Poor wicked children, poor dear children! Where did you find them?" We were gently cared for, had wine and water given to us, a very little food, as we were unable to eat much, and were put to bed. I was more shy than Harry, and could not believe in Aunt Becky's kindness; so I cast doubtful side glances at her every now and then. Harry, more open-hearted, threw both his arms round Aunty's neck, and sobbed on her shoulder in sheer despair. "Don't be angry, Aunty, don't scold Nelly; scold me if you like, I made her do it. I won't ever, ever say such a naughty thing again, but don't beat Nelly."

Aunty was moved, she returned Harry's embrace, kissed him fervently and then me, but never spoke a word. I do not know how long I had slept in my little white cot by her bedside, that night, when I felt myself aroused by something. I started up, and saw Aunt Becky before me, with glassy eyes and rigid face, in her night dress, holding a burning candle in her hand. I heard her murmur: "I

must wipe them up, George, quick, I must wipe them up." She took a large wet sponge, and was going out of the room. I was daring enough to jump up too, and follow her, with bare feet, and in my nightdress. There she went on before me in the still night, down the stairs, passed the library into the quaint old hall. I shuddered a little, but I followed. Every now and then she bent down, and wiped up an imaginary spot. With my little naked feet I followed her. She passed through the hall, drew the rusty bolt of a door that was never used, and went into a passage that led direct into the grounds at the side of the house, where briars and brambles had been allowed to grow up in confusion, and where none of the servants liked to go, as it was said that many an evil deed had been committed there in former times. I do not know how I had the courage to steal after Aunty, but I did; and heard her murmur every now and then: "Let us make haste, George, be quick, here is the spade! Now kneel and pray—you won't?—then I shall." And Aunty knelt down, the candle all the time in her hand, and prayed: "Almighty God, forgive my brother and me the sin to bury this man in unhallowed earth. He was not killed intentionally, your eye has seen it; Oh, pardon our wish to save the honour of our ancient name before the world, and forgive my poor, poor brother the fault that brought him to this dreadful misfortune. Have pity upon us, oh God!" I could hear a sob, I stood shivering and shaking on the cold earth, the night wind blew into the passage, and my teeth chattered to hear Aunty pray, but the sob overcame my childish heart. I went behind her, pulled her nightdress, and said: "Oh, don't Aunty, don't, please!" Not having an idea of the consequences, I saw her turn, glare at me, then I heard a fearful scream that rang through the

passage and the hall,—the candle fell from Aunty's hands, was blown out, and catching me up, she fled back. My senses whirled at first round and round, then left me altogether.

Weeks had passed *then*, I knew not how. The next time I was conscious of what was going on around me, I heard somebody whispering: "Dear Mr. Morton, this sleep is to be the crisis; I hope the greatest trial will be over. My strength is beginning to fail. Dear little Nelly, how glad I shall be to hear you speak to me. Do you think, sir, we may hope?—Oh, say yes!"

"My dear Miss Rebecca, be wise, and be patient; you will be rewarded for it."

I could not at once raise my eye-lids, but, presently, when I did so, I saw Aunt Becky on one side of my bed, looking so pale and wan, and our dear Rector on the other side. I turned my eyes from one to the other. Aunty rose, bent over me, and took my hands, on which I felt warm tear-drops fall. The Rector put his hand on Aunty's shoulder, and said: "My dear Miss Rebecca, God has pardoned you. Kiss Nelly for me, she will know us again, now." And left the room to us. I wanted to raise myself, but could not. I wanted to speak, but could only whisper: "Aunty, dear, where is Harry?" "Harry, my darling, is quite well, very anxious to know how little Nelly is, and at school in Ipswich." "Send him my love, Aunty, and do give me a kiss." I had the kiss, closed my eyes again, and went back into the land of dreams.

When I woke once more, I found I could look around better, and speak better. My head felt so light, and I heard that all my thick curls had been cut off. My hands looked very thin and white, and I used to hold them up, and scan them, and fold them resignedly on the counter-

pane, with a peculiar feeling of inward happiness and content. This was brought about by Aunty's different ways; I would watch her by the hour. She was so changed; her eyes were not half so fiery, there was such a loving light in them; her mouth appeared so much fuller and rounder, and her nose by far not so sharp, that I began to think Aunty had grown quite beautiful.

A new life began for us. I had recovered, and became aunty's constant companion. A young lady from the village was engaged as my daily governess, as Aunty said she would know better how to manage me in school hours; but, after study, Aunty and I were firm friends. I skipped by her side as she went about, still in her old way, seeing to everything, and yet changed. No hard words, no impatient rebukes there were; her remarks came out so much gentler and milder, that they were no rebukes at all. All the people were astonished, and I cannot say worked worse. You saw no fear on their faces, but an anxious desire to please. Harry came home for his holidays, and there was high glee between us both, tempered by a little more modesty on my side. Aunty watched us closely, and seemed happy when we returned to her from our runs, full of life, and our hearts full of love for her. Even in winter how beautiful the place was: the trees were never quite buried; whole rows of the red holly shimmered in the winter sun; the large sycamores kept their dark hues against the changing winter sky; the ivy never forsook us quite, and the sward was soft and green as ever. The air from the not very distant sea seemed to blow a little fresher, and somehow I think birds and other creatures never left our happy nook even in winter-time.

Harry had never mentioned my illness, nor had I—some-

thing dark hung around it, and we both left that dark cover unraised. One morning, at breakfast, Aunty spread the letter-bag, and saw a letter with a black edge; she did not read it, but put it by her side, waited till we had finished our breakfast, and then left the room, giving us permission to go out. On our return we were told to come to Aunty in her own room. When we got there, we found her sitting by the fire with that black-edged letter before her. On a little table near her lay the open bible. We saw Aunty had shed tears, and we hastened to caress her.

"My dear children," she said, "I have to tell you some sad news: Harry's father, who was obliged to live away from England in a foreign land, is dead. Come here, Harry, close to my side"—Harry nestled up to her—"and listen. Your mother I never knew, she died when you were a baby; your father, my only brother, was much younger than myself, and very unhappy; he could not stay here, and made me promise to be like a mother to you. So I will be, dear Harry, you are now owner of this beautiful old place. I have never told you much about your ancestors, who were all brave, though very wilful, but you shall hear many of the stories I know about them now. There is no danger any more of disgrace coming upon the Pierrepoints. When your father left, Harry, this place was much in debt, but I have managed for myself, have cleared all that off, and have something handsome to give our Nelly."

"What do you mean," answered Harry, looking up at Aunty, "can't Nelly and I share alike? It's all the same, what I have got she has got."

"Very well, Harry, time will prove."

"Aunty dear, can I see my father's likeness?"

"Yes, my boy, you shall see it now. God rest him in peace. You were but a baby when he left you to me."

Aunty had that evening a fine oil-painting of her brother placed in the old hall, next to her father's portrait. Harry and I stood a long time before it, regarding it attentively.

"Nelly," Harry said, "having regarded it closely, I can see my father was sometimes cross, like Aunty was once, in a time long gone by. I shall never be like that, and won't you help me to keep out of it. I am sure it's wicked."

"I will," I responded fervently.

Years flew by. Harry had finished his studies at the Ipswich Grammar School, and had for two years resided with a private tutor. Aunty wished him to travel for another two years. He came home, and it was decided on that he should accompany a friend abroad, and then settle down in his own desmesne.

We were the same, grown up both; we had not changed towards each other; we were firm friends in weal and woe. Aunty had kept on her course; ever diligent; ever improving every hour in the day; spurring every one around her to exertion, and a very loving aunt to me. The Rector came oftener than ever, and always left Aunty more cheerful than he found her. We visited scarely any one, but worked hard in our parish, and there was so much occupation in our own home around us that I did not long much for the gaieties of other girls' lives. To drive now and then down to the beautiful beach near Felixstowe, and spend a sunny day on the cliffs, watching the sea-gulls, and dreaming an hour away, was our highest enjoyment in summer; and telling romantic stories of the Pierrepoints and our neighbourhood, so rich in historical lore, in the winter.

Harry had been gone a year and a-half and more. Our

letters from Greece were telling us that the return tour would soon be began, and I thought the nearer the time came the more anxious Aunty became. One evening in stormy March, as the wind blew harder than usual round our sheltered dell, the trees groaned, the rooks cawed noisily, and old creaky noises seemed to be heard in the old hall and all over the house. Aunty and I sat before the large fire in the library, looking into it after our late tea, as if we could find a solution of the future in it.

"Come here, nearer to me, Nelly," said Aunty. "I have much to say to you before Harry's return. I have put it off as long as I could, and it is very hard to say it now, but it is my duty to do it, and not leave you any longer in ignorance of my history. Nelly, do you love me, and do you think anything could make you love me less, after all these years?"

"No, no, Aunty, nothing, nothing could. You have been a very mother to me."

"Thank you, Nelly, be a staunch good girl, I shall try you hard. My father had three children, myself, your mother, and Harry's father. Our mother had been a great beauty, a nobleman's daughter, had been petted and spoilt, and, when married, was unable to manage or curb our father's Pierrepoint spirit. Storm and sunshine chequered our parents' married life. I remember in my childish days more storms than sunshine. My mother did not love me much, as I had the Pierrepoint face; she adored your mother, pretty little Nelly, and might have become happier after my brother's birth, had she not by some imprudence caught cold, and died before the baby was a week old. This death changed our father, who had never been an amiable man, into a morose one, whom only I could in some measure please. He kept us nurse-

and some kind of governess, but there was no proper control over us. Between our father and us, there was no confidence. I grew up under this headstrong and wilful, but earnest and anxious to do my duty. Nelly was like April weather—changeable, and poor George, our brother, weak and hasty in character. I had to bear the burden of the different tempers, and chafed over it, becoming, I believe, a very tyrant to all, but the only one in any way able to take the reins and manage our affairs. I was eighteen, not beautitul, but people said handsome and proud, when Arthur Vane came to visit us. He was a distant relative of our mother's, in the army, and a very agreeable man. He proposed to me after a fortnight's visit, so much was he taken with the way in which I conducted the house. I admired him greatly, and he respected me. Why this feeling of his seemed to flatter me more than love, I cannot tell; I suppose it was in my character. My father approved highly of the match, regretting that he should lose me, and wondering who should be the manager now; but his anxiety was shortened,—he died suddenly.

"Nelly had been away on Mr. Vane's first and second visit, she returned now; she was a year younger than myself, and very beautiful. Mr. Vane hurried down to us in our bereavement; he saw Nelly, and fell madly in love with her. A man like him could not hide it, do what he would, and Nelly, not caring what wound she inflicted, as long as her own wishes were gratified, did not hesitate to show that she too admired Arthur. I was hurt beyond measure. I never reproached Arthur, but became cold as stone, inwardly and outwardly old far beyond my age. Our father's death, his intricate affairs, Arthur's faithlessness, my sister's unkindness, and the serious anxiety our brother George already began to give me, were a heavy load for one so young.

"However much I felt the burden, I bore it, and worked on. Arthur Vane left us after a month's stay; I am sure in terrible conflict what to do. Nelly did not hide the tears she shed. I merely shook hands, and said nothing. Our life was not a happy one, you may imagine, my child; we upbraided each other frequently with faithlessness and want of affection.

"'He was nothing to you, Rebecca,' Nelly would say. 'You never loved him; I do. I know he loves me. Why don't you give him up? It is mean of you to keep his love from me.'

"'I shall give him up when it suits me,' I answered sharply; 'and you shall *then* not have him.'

"'Will I not, will I not?' she answered, stamping her foot with determination.

"We quarrelled on like this for months. Arthur Vane came no more near us, and never wrote to me nor I to him. I had plenty to do to take my thoughts away, but my pride was offended and a very demon of misery began to work in me.

"One evening in March, just like this one, the wind whistled round us, the doors creaked, and we had quarrelled frightfully. Nelly had, in a passion, gone upstairs to her room, threatening all sorts of things. I followed her at last, but found her not, and heard from one of the maid-servants that she had said she must herself go out that evening, cold as it was, to see her old nurse up the lane, who was very ill. I ran across the park and just caught her at the gate.

"'Where are you going, Nelly?' I asked.

"'Where I choose to. It is nothing to such a fury as you are!'

"'A fury, indeed! And what are you?'

"'Your ill-treated sister, you haughty tyrant! and I mean to show you that I will not bear it any longer.'

"'Go, then, go, you dainty damsel! I do not want you! Go, go quickly,' I said, gnashing my teeth in very anger, and pushed her out.

"I naturally thought I should find her next morning, as I had gone to bed and passed a sleepless night; but no Nelly did I find, and no Nelly we could hear from. A month later I received a letter from London, stating that she had gone, with money obtained from her nurse, straight to London, to Arthur Vane; that they were married; that Arthur had, however, changed into a regiment stationed in India, and that they had left. Nelly, dear, forgive me my harsh treatment of my sister and your mother; God has tried me severely since. Your father and mother had been married some years before you were born. I never knew you existed even till the mutiny broke out, and your father was killed, and your mother, though saved from the first attack of the sepoys, died of exhaustion and fright. Before her death, she wrote to me a long letter, bequeathing you to me in preference to sending you to the Vane family, as the surest token she could give me that not a feeling of anger did she take with her into the grave, and that she fully trusted me, I should do my duty by her child. Nelly dear, have I done it; can you forgive me, that I was so unsisterly to your poor mother and so cruel that one dreadful night. I have suffered for it; as I know that Arthur would not have gone to India had he not feared my revengeful spirit."

I laid my hand on Aunty's shoulder, and drew closer to her, but my throat was choked, I could not speak, when I thought of my dainty mother rushing from her home and angry sister on such a March night, and there would also rise before me that scene of the night visit in my early childhood—so long forgotten. I shuddered a little, but recollecting myself, I took Aunty's trembling hand and kissed it.

"Thank you, Nelly," she said, "and now I have something worse to tell you. I confide Harry's father's fate to you. Nelly, I never shall tell him. A young man should feel no shame for his father, and Harry's father expiated his crime by his separation from his child, his country, and his renunciation of a position not the most disagreeable in the world: I mean that of a member of the country gentry in England. I have only one more confidant, our own good Rector. He has been a true comforter to me, else I believe I should have broken down after that terrible night scene with you years ago.

"My brother George was a nice, a talented boy, but weak and hasty in character, as I told you; as little love as there existed between me and Nelly, just as strong an affection bound me and George together. But I now see I was too overbearing with him. I could not enter into his faults, into his shortcomings—I could not even understand them. I scoffed at them; called them ugly names, till I made him deceitful. Conscious of my own strength, I continually paraded it before his eyes, and failed utterly in exercising any good influence over him. George was educated at Eton, and went to College. At both places he made bad acquaintances, the worst in the world for him. Easy-going young men, who let the world go pretty much as it chose, as long as they gratified their peculiar penchant, regardless of consequences. He managed to pass the examinations and to hide his faults from his superiors. It would have been better had they come out boldly, there would have been more hope of correction. He left College after Nelly had been gone some years, and asked me to give my consent to his travelling abroad with friends; I did consent. It was understood that he should return, settle down here, and marry.

"I always had nice long letters, and was perfectly lulled into security about him. No college-debts seemed left behind, and no one came to ask in a doubtful manner after him, or wanted money from him. He drew largely on me, but still I overlooked it, thinking the truth better than deception about his expenses. Two years passed, three—and I pressed for his return. At last he came, some years before you were brought to me.

"Nelly, shall I ever forget that return? Shall I ever forget the brother that had gone and that returned? The only being left in this world to love and cherish? The broken-down creature that drove up here with his foreign valet, giving orders right and left? Irritable, selfish, unmanly, miserable in every way, George Pierrepoint stood before me; even shame was gone. I had enough sense to perceive that, and the hopelessness of any rebuke, and at once acquiesced in my misfortune. My well-ordered house was turned topsy-turvy within a week. The valet had upset the kitchen, the butlery, the pantry, in fact everything; it was useless to try to keep things steady. And still the old home air exercised some influence on George. Gradually he became stronger in health, took more out-of-door exercise, and was more gentlemanly in his ways. In a month he began to look a little like the old George, and I often found him watch me askance, as if he meant to say something and could not. He was always anxious about his letters, and no one was ever allowed to enter his room but his valet. Still I feared no mystery.

"One day George told me that he could not always stay with me, and that he should that day send on his valet to London to prepare lodgings for him, and meant to follow the next day. I was astonished, and asked him why he would not stay here on his own property, and re-open intercourse with the surrounding gentry?

"'Because I cannot, Rebecca. I will not tell you a lie about it. So, if you please, ask me no more.'

"I felt a death-blow—and said no more.

"The valet packed up that day, and went on with part of the luggage. George and I dined together. He retired to his own room after dinner, saying that he had important letters to write before he went. I could not help it; I sat up after all the servants had gone to bed, and some feeling came so strongly upon me, that I determined to go once more to George's room, and try to reason with him. As I neared his door, I heard voices. Who could it be? The valet was gone, and no other servant ever entered his room. I stopped close to the door, and listened. Yes, it was the valet's voice and George's. Had he come back, then? I was petrified, and breathed hard. The voices rose higher, higher. They spoke French. I never was a good French scholar, and could not understand them. But I understood the blows I heard in a minute or two, and just rushed into the room as my brother called out in English: "What, you will stab me, you brute?" And trying to get hold of the dagger in the valet's hand, he tripped him up, and the man fell upon it himself. I heard three distinct heavy groans, and all was still.

"'Oh, God, George, what have you done?' was all I could say. We lifted him up, and met a blanched face; the man was dead. The blood gushed from the wound right through his throat and out of his mouth; it was a fearful sight. George sat there bewildered and demented; when I looked at him my own sharp sense of consciousness returned. To have George Pierrepoint, my brother, brought before the magistrates, doubted most likely, taken to prison, and condemned for murder to be hanged, was impossible. I went up to George, and said: 'Listen, George, we must bury him outside the traitor's door—that is the secret door

into the park.' I had to shake my brother before I could make him understand me. He followed me mechanically in my directions. We stopped the blood, and dragged the body down the stairs, through the hall, along the passage, into the dark corner. I fetched a spade, we dug a hole, and buried that man. I prayed over the grave, George would not. We returned; and carefully I wiped up every drop of blood I could find. I washed away every sign in George's room, and laboured all night cleaning his clothes and hands for him—he was utterly incapable of doing it himself. When I had finished, I sat down and looked at George.

"'You must leave here to-morrow, or rather to-day, George, as you intended, to arouse no suspicion. Does anyone know this man came back?' George shook his head and answered slowly: 'No one; he left the luggage in Ipswich, and returned to play the spy upon me.'

"'Listen, George, you are henceforward an exile. I could not nor would not bear the anxiety to think it should be found out, and you be in danger, therefore you *must* live abroad. I will send you any remittance, and if you marry there, I will promise you that I will keep intact your property for your children, should you have any.' George did not answer me, he sat there stunned. I begged him to lie down, as I should be obliged to go into my room for the sake of appearances. He caught me by my dress and would not let me go. I had to stay. Then I made him go with me into my room, and tumbled the bed, as if I had slept in it, returning into his room with him.

"The morning came. I pretended that I had risen early, as my brother was not well, and by eleven o'clock George left to go direct to London. His luggage was to be sent after him. I breathed lighter. I locked my brother's room,

saying that I had papers to arrange there. It was not open for a month, when the spots had dried up, and no one ever knew my terrible secret. To the Rector I opened my heart when your life was in danger, and he has prayed with me over that grave.

"A month after my brother was gone I received this letter:

"'*Dear unfortunate Sister,*

"'*My sin has found me out. I wanted to leave you to come to London to my young wife and baby—I never told you I was married to a French girl, as sweet as a rose, that wretch's sister. He was not a valet, but would come with me to the Hall, afraid I might leave her. He knew I should not have done it. For this he returned again at night. You know his fate, know mine too: my little Virginie is dead, and perhaps 'tis best, she could not understand where her brother had gone to, and I could not tell her. I send you my boy, and his certificate of birth. Bring him up to be a better man than his father has been. I am sorry to tell you that I have heavily mortgaged the property, and squandered the money for years. That is the reason why you never had any bills sent, or people come after money. I don't ask you to forgive me, because you cannot. I have some miserable years still to live, and only one comfort, that my Harry will be in your hands from his childhood.*

"'*Your own Brother,*

"'*GEORGE.*'

"The baby came, and so came the debts. I had to work and manage for years, and became harder, and harder, and harder than ever. George received his remittance quarterly,

in the south of France, where he lived till that black-edged letter came years ago. You children softened me when you rebelled against my harshness; there was honesty in that rebellion, and you conquered me by it sooner, than by smooth words. I have known some happiness since then. My dear Nelly, do not judge me harshly, no shame came to the Pierrepoints."

We sat long, and long, and long, our hands locked together. I promised Aunty never to divulge her secret to Harry, and accompanied her to her room, sitting by her till she fell asleep.

In the morning, when I had risen rather later than usual, and found Aunt Becky not astir, I went to her room, and found her dead. The sorely-tried heart had given way under the excitement of the tale of her sorrows.

Much respect was shown to Aunt Becky's memory.

Harry hurried home. We met; but no love words were spoken. We gave up the hall on my wish. The land around is cultivated; but there lies the house deserted, telling its own sad tale.

I am nineteen, Harry twenty-one, and when a year has passed over dear Aunty's death, our good Rector, with whom I now live, is to unite the children of those who have passed away.

THE END.